

MY ADVENTURES AS
A LABOUR LEADER
BY
FRANK HODGES

THE J. F. C.
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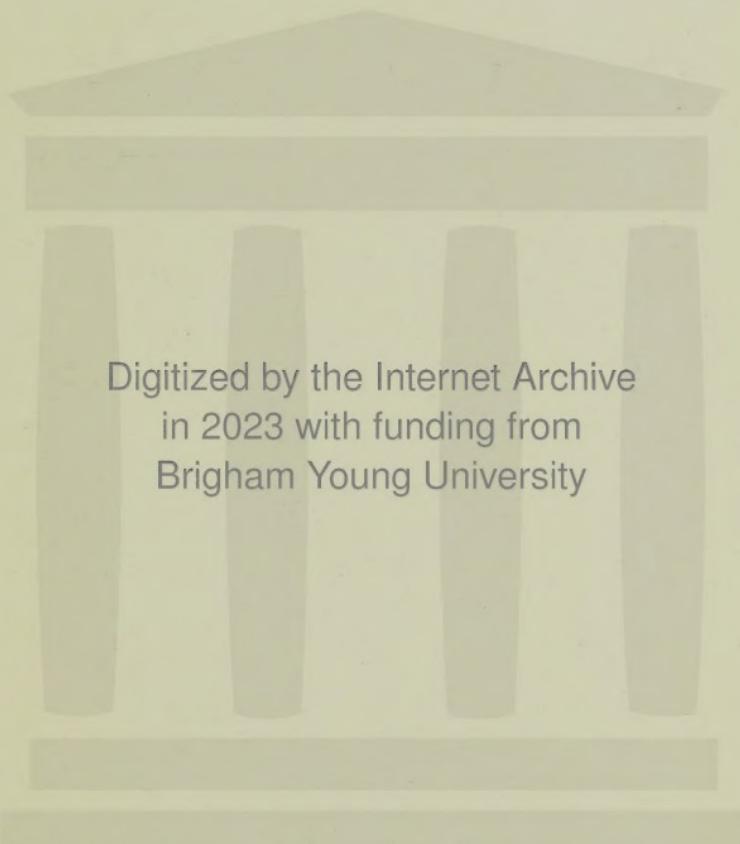
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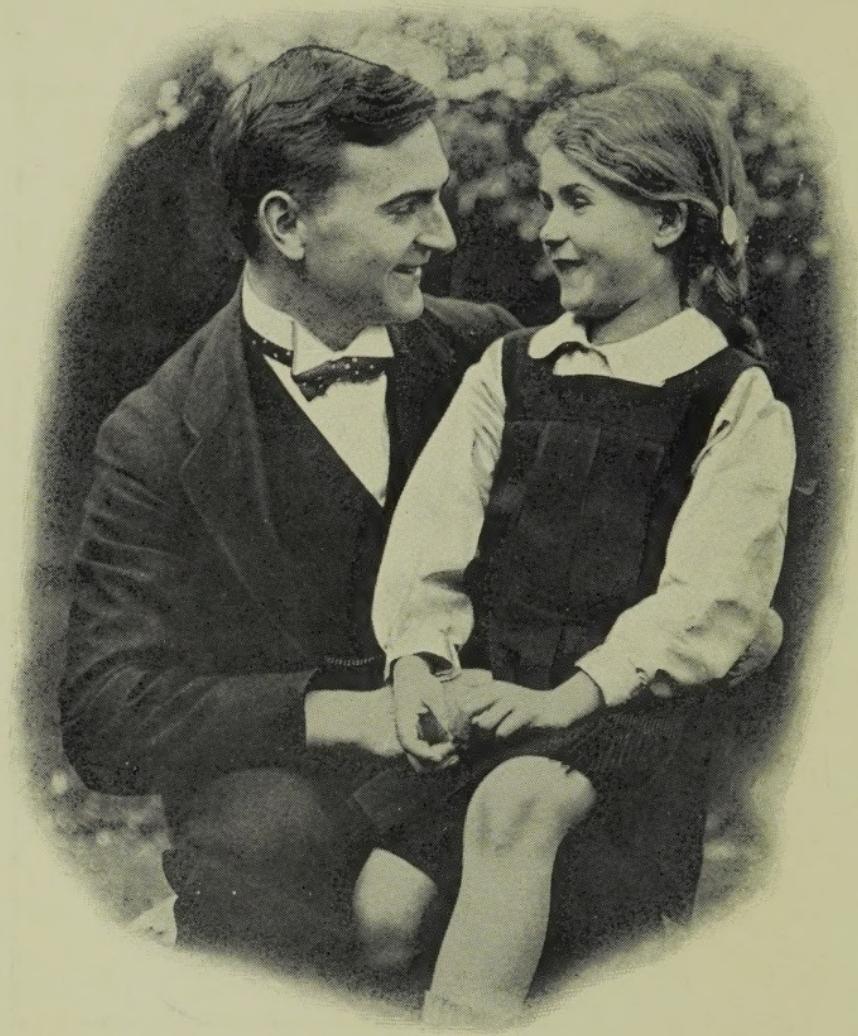


Photo: Farringdon Photo Co.

F. H. AND HIS DAUGHTER, VÄNNINNA.

“Far from the madding crowd.”

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BY FRANK HODGES



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MY ADVENTURES AS A LABOUR LEADER

CHAPTER I

EARLY ADVENTURES

MY first adventure in life was on the morning of 30th April, 1887. I was born that day. It was in the old-world village of Woolaston, near Lydney, Gloucestershire. Deep in the heart of the countryside, far from a railway station, cut off from the hurly-burly of the world, rested the little cottage in which lived my parents and the remainder of the family.

The cottage was owned by my grandfather, Thomas Hodges, one of Gloucestershire's sturdy, liberal-minded, progressive farmers. My grandmother, Ann, lived with him in a larger house adjoining the one in which I was born.

I have revisited that cottage in later years, and find it now occupied by a retired sea captain and his good wife, both of whom have welcomed me there from time to time as though I were their own son. They have always been interested in my activities in public life, though of an entirely different political persuasion.

On my father's side it is credibly recorded that we are of Welsh stock, although on my mother's side there is no doubt about our English ancestry.

My mother was one of those gentle, courageous souls, who devoted her life to the bringing up of a large family of six sons, the strain and stress of which brought her to an all too early end.

My father inherited much of my grandfather's liberal temperament. He has always been a sturdy democrat and Nonconformist. His creed he instilled into his sons, but not always by plain argument. He had frequent resort to the buckle end of a strap.

My earliest recollections are related to my grandparents and their simple country home. I think reverently of my grandmother. She was a most wonderfully religious woman, not only filled with the fire and fervour of the Gospel, but one who practised in her daily life the tenets of her Christian faith.

I recollect, at the age of between five and six, how, in company with my brothers, I used to steal off in the autumn into the orchards adjoining the cottage, and, with them, climb the apple and pear trees where the choicest fruit was to be had. This always excited my grandfather to fury. When he discovered us, he would stand at the bottom of the trees, and with clods of dirt would try to hurl us from the branches to the ground. In this he showed marked dexterity.

But our grandmother always interceded on our behalf, and many a just punishment was averted.

In this village of Woolaston we all started our

schooling days. At the age of four I toddled off to the quaint village school. The old building stands to-day exactly as it did then, without structural changes. The old schoolmaster, whom I always remember as being extremely kind, has long since passed away.

These were days of great agricultural depression. Gloucestershire did not escape, and the men of the village had little to do and little to earn. They heard of the fabulous wages which were being earned in the mining districts of the neighbouring county of Monmouthshire. Men who had left the village to go to work in the mines would come back occasionally for a short holiday and tell stories of the work they had been doing in the coal pits of Monmouthshire. They spoke of the wages that could be earned, the joy that could be secured in life, and became accidentally the propagandists of the colliery companies, the recruiting sergeants of the colliery proprietors.

One after the other the young married men of the village, and the sons of older parents, left the farmsteads, the plough, the reaper, the waggons and the cattle, for the whirling machinery and deadly perils of the mine.

Among these emigrants were my father and elder brother. They, too, went to seek their fortune in coal, and when I reached the age of six we packed up our small household belongings, and, in our turn, took train from the fair and pleasant countryside to the grimy, dusty, forbidding mining valleys.

I have a consciousness even now of leaving the

MY ADVENTURES

village with extreme regret, for we travelled late at night. None of us had ever been in a train before, excepting my mother. There seemed to me to be something ominous and sinister in the big slag heaps and the weird colliery frames, standing out in the lamplight as our train passed by them into the little station which for many years after seemed to me to be an outlet from Hades.

We lived at Abertillery, in the county of Monmouthshire, the village in which I lived my life as a coal miner, and in which I remained until I finally left to become a miners' agent, seventeen years later, in one of the Glamorganshire mining valleys.

There may be for the young man, for the adventurous adult, certain pleasurable thrills upon entering a new country, but I recollect no pleasure in abandoning the green meadows, the flowering orchards, the peaceful cattle of the countryside, for the rattle and roar of an industrial town.

It was necessity which was responsible for our emigration, a necessity which has been experienced in this country practically since the beginning of the industrial era ; and it is a necessity which seems to be just as prevalent to-day. The depopulation of our countryside and the overcrowding of our industrial towns is one of the greatest and oldest of our problems. But it is not insoluble.

One of the most interesting of my first recollections in coming to the industrial town of Abertillery was the sensation that I did not speak

quite the same as the other boys. Immediately upon my arrival at school, a school known as the British School, I realised that I was not speaking their language. I discovered afterwards that they spoke English with a very pronounced Welsh accent, while I spoke the dialect of the Gloucestershire backwoods. This dialect comes back quite naturally to me even now in moments of intense feeling and utterance.

My school experiences are always vivid before me. I loved the games of the school, and oft-times neglected my work for the play and companionship of my fellows. I was rewarded accordingly.

Looking back upon the system of education of that period I think of the little individual attention which was given to the scholars in the elementary schools. The schools were small and crowded, the classes were large and unwieldy, and were it not for the devotion to duty and real love of children which the heads and many of the teachers had in those days, education would have been a very poor thing indeed. But for the little we had we return thanks.

Later we were transferred to a new school in the same town, the head of which was the son of the old schoolmaster who controlled the school we had just left. He was a remarkable man. His name was Mr. Albert Bevan, but the boys nicknamed him Bertie. He had a certain strong religious element in his nature, was a devoted Baptist, and worked earnestly in the religious life of the community. He set up certain standards of fairness for the lads of his school, the

character of which I only realised later in life. But, undoubtedly, these standards left an indelible impression upon my plastic mind. He was the antithesis of Mr. Squeers.

It was in this school—Queen's Street Boys' School, Abertillery—that I first felt the wild rush of resentment against the cruelty of man. We had a teacher who made an unfavourable impression upon the minds of the boys by his harshness and unfairness. One day he whacked a school chum of mine unmercifully for some simple fault which in the case of an ordinary teacher would have been met by a gentle rebuke. He forgot himself so completely as to administer certain indiscriminate kicks to this unfortunate lad, and this evoked in me such a raging, tearing passion of anger that I flew out of my place, and with the strength of half a dozen boys landed him on the point of the jaw.

He was dazed, but not sufficiently to let me pass unscathed. But the incident gave me intense satisfaction, a feeling which I have experienced many times since, although perhaps my rebellion against cruelty has not always been in such hot blood. We were punished in the customary fashion. But we petitioned the headmaster for the teacher's dismissal. I was chosen spokesman. He was discharged.

My spirit was sensible to small acts of kindness. I seemed ready to be the faithful dog of anybody who acted with humanity. The usual rough and tumble of school life was mine, but at the age of twelve I left school, the circumstances of the family making it imperative that I should

leave on the very day after attaining my twelfth birthday in order to work to supplement the family income.

This was not an experience peculiar to me, nor is it the experience of a few collier boys here and there. Before then, collier boys were allowed to go down the pit at the tender age of six or eight, being carried to their work upon their fathers' backs. The energy required in walking in was more than the frail plant of a body could yield, and thus was the child's energy conserved. To-day, the age for starting underground is fourteen years, but the same almost inevitable fate awaits the collier boy as awaited me. In the main his life in the mine offers but little chance of escape. The occupation is a cul-de-sac.

To-day, however, the parents of the mining villages passionately yearn and doggedly work for their children to have the advantage of a longer and higher education. But they, too, are in the main, the victims of economic necessity, and oftentimes, despite their good intentions, look forward to the day when their boy will don his pit clothes, and go to the mine for the first time. There is the same old desire to increase the family income, because the father's income is far too slender to provide the family with the necessities of life.

There is a fatalism about the life of a mining boy which few such boys escape. Once a miner, always a miner. In most of the cases the village life is purely mining. There are no other industries to which a boy can be put. Into the mine he must go, and unless he has the spirit of

adventure strongly implanted in him, in the mining village he will remain until he is deposited in the well-filled graveyard on the wind-swept hill which overlooks the scene of his limited and pathetic activities.

Between leaving school and entering the mine I did multifarious jobs, from being a newsboy to a grocer's assistant, but on my thirteenth birthday I descended the coal pit. Boy-like, one made the descent full of enthusiasm and expectation. But forty-eight hours at the coal face takes away all the novelty and romance.

This was soon after the termination of the great strike of 1898, when a large section of the miners of South Wales fought for a period of six months. It was in the year before the South Wales Miners' Federation became a part of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. It was a strike against the sliding scale, a term used to describe the system by which wages were regulated by the rise and fall in the price of coal, at the rate of so many per cents. advance or reduction for every shilling increase or fall in the average of all f.o.b. prices of coal ascertained by Custom House officials.

It was a long and bitter struggle. The people were reduced to direst poverty, but like most miners' strikes it took place in the summer time. The weather has always been fine for strikes of coal miners. But it is a mixed blessing. The public demand for coal is always influenced by sunshine. King Sol invariably beats King Coal.

The children who attended school, among



Photo: Central News.

ONE TOUCH OF NATURE.

On the Miners' Golf Course, Rhondda.

whom I was numbered, were supplied with their breakfasts and lunches in the schools. The fare was not bountiful, but it kept the bodies and souls of the scholars together. The Acts relating to the feeding of necessitous school children were unknown, the sustenance came from charitable sources, and in the afternoons both children and parents lined up regularly at the local Salvation Army hall for the purpose of getting their daily ration of soup and bread for family purposes.

From the very commencement of my existence in the coal fields I seem to have been associated with strikes and lock-outs. They seemed to be, even in those days, a part of the normal life of the mining community. The miners are accustomed to strife and struggle. It has become a kind of second nature to them.

I have often smiled in later years when I have heard my colleagues in the trade union movements relate their extraordinary experiences in leading a strike for six, nine or ten days. I once heard the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas declare, when accused by an impatient colleague of funk in the face of a possible strike, that he himself had led a strike for eleven days among the railwaymen, and he said it as though it were some wonderful and unique experience. It was—for him. But for the miners, whose strikes are very rarely less than three months, but which have been known to last, in certain instances, for six, nine and twelve months, the strike or the lock-out is no exceptional thing.

It is, indeed, beyond the comprehension of the average miner to contemplate a period of years

uninterrupted by a long and bitter industrial conflict.

The first chapter in my life, my school life, was closed in an atmosphere of industrial war. I had tasted poverty to the very dregs. I became a potential rebel.

CHAPTER II

A MOUSE ON SHAKESPEARE

THE day of my thirteenth birthday witnessed my arrival at the colliery in which I was to start my pit life.

Despite the daily accidents, fatal and non-fatal, which occur in collieries, and which characterise the colliery village life, there is always something of a lure for the young boy in a pit job.

The Welsh pit boys are invariably togged out with a new pair of pit boots and what is known locally as a pair of white moleskin trousers. I remember now how fine it felt to be decked out in these pit clothes.

Elderly miners look with feelings of pity upon the little lads who are going to make their first descent into the bowels of the earth, for, without exaggeration, nearly every colliery records the sad tale of a fatality which has overtaken a lad upon the first and only day in which he ever worked in a coal pit.

I remember certain pitying looks which were

cast in my direction that morning, and when I stepped upon the cage, the men seemed to gather about me as though to offer protection from an unknown foe.

The actual descent in the shaft was something in the way of a sensation. One sank rapidly down out of the daylight—down, down, down in the abysmal blackness. The cage travels swiftly. About half-way down the engineman applies the brake. This checks the momentum, and the queer sensation is experienced of coming back up again.

Every miner experiences this. Even in later years it remains with him. He knows, in fact, that the cage is still descending, but every physical sensation indicates that it is returning to the surface, and this continues until the cage comes to a standstill at the pit bottom.

Mine was an easy job at the start. I was a door-boy. The work consisted of opening and shutting two doors used for ventilation purposes. As the pit ponies came along the roadway with their empty tubs behind them, the door-boy would first open one door and let the ponies and the tubs through. He would close it after they had passed, and then run beside the ponies and the tubs to open the other door, through which they would pass on their way to the inner workings.

This was, of course, done to prevent the air current from being taken from another part of the workings, where it was used for the purpose of keeping men and animals alive and for the dilution of explosive gas mixtures.

When all the ponies and their tubs had passed through, the door-boy waited for their return journey. It was oftentimes a lonely vigil. The loneliness made one contemplative. One formed a very accurate knowledge of the temper and disposition of the animals, but the character of their drivers was much more elusive.

The door-boy soon discovered that the habits and tempers of horses were as variable as those of the men.

The wages for this work were considered high at the time. They were ten shillings a week for a fifty-four hour week. They were certainly higher than the wages of the boys of the same age who worked at the coal face, although the latter invariably worked very much harder. The average wage for these boys would be about nine shillings a week, but their early work at the coal face served as a form of apprenticeship to coal hewing.

It was in the month of April that I started to work. At this time of year one saw daylight in the morning before descending, and some little daylight in the evenings after returning home. This, of course, lasted until the month of September and the beginning of October. Then daylight was no more for us, except on Sundays, until the following spring.

Life in those days, except on the Sabbath, was a life of constant blackness, and one of the sweetest sensations I ever experienced as a pit boy was to witness the rays of the rising sun tipping the mountain peaks in the west with gold as I walked to the pit in the early mornings.

I would pause on my way just for a minute or two to see if I could detect that streak of gold coming down a few inches from the top of the hill, but the hoot of the buzzer hurried one on and down.

The collier boys worked much longer than the door-boys. They had no regular time for leaving the mine. At the end of the shift proper there were always a lot of odds and ends to be done, and this lengthened their working day. The first few days of a collier boy's work is the cruellest experience possible. Bones and muscles have to be adapted to the height of a two-foot-six seam. The pain is oftentimes intolerable.

Soon I was removed to mind another door through which trains of tubs passed, and not horses as before. This left me with even more time on my hands, and many a time I yearned for the companionship of my fellow creatures deep down in the mine. The mice, however, were my invariable companions. They were tame and friendly, and seemed to understand.

As a means of diversion I took one day an old copy of Shakespeare into the mine. I remember it well. It had thin paper covers and extremely small print. I had toyed with it a great deal at home in the winter nights, but had never really settled down to read it.

I hid it in my coat as I stepped on to the cage, so as to escape the vigilance of the over-man. Then quickly to the little cabin which was made for me near my door, and whenever I had an opportunity I read this book.

It was a difficult task, but with the aid of an

oil safety lamp I managed it. I read every play and every poem until the book became so dirty that the print became scarcely visible in that dim, spluttering light.

The plays stirred my imagination, while the sonnets enlivened my emotions in an indescribable manner. Occasionally the old road-man, whose duty it was to repair the roads, came to my cabin for a rest and a gossip. One day he caught me in the act of reading my dirty folio. My first thought was that he would take it away from me, or report me, but happily nothing of the kind occurred.

He was anxious to know what I was reading. He could neither read nor write himself, and he asked me to read one of Shakespeare's plays aloud to him. This I did, taking as my play "*A Midsummer Night's Dream.*" With the aid of the two lamps, reading was easy.

He was interested immediately, and later was fascinated. I found it wholly pleasurable work to read aloud. It has the double effect of being pleasant to hear and of impressing itself more clearly upon the mind ; for I remember how much easier it was to memorise passages after reading aloud than after reading to myself.

The visits increased in number. The road-man would make three or four visits a day just to listen for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at a time.

For a while I kept this book in a little niche behind some timber. One morning I was horrified to find that the mice had eaten up the whole of "*Venus and Adonis.*" From that time

I was careful to take it home, and I read it there as well as underground until it literally faded away.

The reading of Shakespeare awakened within me a tremendous passion for other books, which I read without discrimination and with a kind of avidity.

This form of reading had one curious result. I began to experience the curious longing to go back to school. This I did in the winter-time, and attended regularly the evening classes which were then run by the county education authority.

Here the night-school teachers were tremendously helpful, as, in fact, they have always been. They arranged one's books on a better plan. But it was not all reading. There were the subjects which one had been inclined to forget. Arithmetic, composition, geography, and the elements of science—all these served, as I see it now, to give some balance to one's mind. I began to be a controversialist.

In the night schools there were no writing pads. The whole of the work had to be done either on slates or on the blackboard.

Arithmetic and grammar appeared to me to be wholly unnecessary subjects, and each night, when the opportunity arose, I would write an infuriated essay against a system of education which made me learn arithmetic and the parsing of sentences.

I would address this essay to the teacher. I took care that he did not see it the same night, but always offered up a prayer that he would in some mysterious manner read it the next morning.

He did once. It was unfortunate. It was not complimentary to him. I had my reward, and was, in addition, threatened with expulsion from the night school.

This spirit of controversy I carried back with me into the mine, and oftentimes I engaged in youthful argument not only with the lads of my own age, but with men.

One of the officials of the mine seemed to take a special delight in hearing this form of controversial statement. I am sure he felt that I was hopelessly wrong. At the same time, he would not confute the argument by sheer dogmatic declaration. He rather invited me to come into newer avenues of thought, none of which I had up to then explored.

He was a geologist, a mining student, and a keen mathematician. We would take long walks together over the hills, looking at this or that piece of rock or formation, examining with intentness some new fossil, measuring the growth of trees, and studying the habits of animals.

The greatest of all the revelations that came to me was through him. He presented me with a copy of Charles Darwin's "Origin of Species." This opened up an entirely new world to me. I read it more quickly than I had ever read any book before. I then read his "Voyage of the Beagle" and followed this up with the essays of Huxley, all of which created a tremendous impression upon my mind. I was undergoing a mental revolution.

Armed and equipped with this new informa-

tion, I was ready to become a member of the local debating society. My friend secured the necessary introduction.

We prepared together the line of our attack upon any subject down for discussion. Like many another local debating society, it was composed of the local schoolmasters and teachers, preachers, journalists, business men, students, and working men, common to nearly all the local debating societies in our towns and villages.

It was a proud moment for me when the secretary asked me to take part in a debate. The subject, I remember, was "Which is the most advantageous to the nation—a monarchical or a republican form of government." I took the side of the republic.

This meant buying new books, or securing them from the public library. But it was worth it. The paper I read was dogmatic to a degree. In the subsequent debate it was shattered to pieces. The humiliation was intense, but it was good. I came to the conclusion that opinions were only worth holding when well-founded. Thus one was able to fight for them, and fight hard.

I had really arrived at a state of downright mental uncertainty. I considered myself an agnostic, when along came that extraordinary movement known as the Welsh revival, headed by that still more extraordinary personality, Evan Roberts.

It was a movement which stirred Wales religiously and emotionally to its very founda-

tions. It was no more than a religious tempest, and I was caught up in it.

I was shot straight out of agnosticism into the waiting arms of religion.

CHAPTER III

A DECISION OF SOME IMPORTANCE

THE Primitive Methodist Chapel was the scene of my first religious choice. I took an intense interest in the religious work of that organisation. This was at sixteen.

I do not think it is a confession of weakness to say that I was carried away for the time being by the downright emotionalism of the revival period.

For a while rational and critical faculties were obscured. We lived in a perfect riot of religious sentiment. But, like the revival itself, this form of intellectual abjectness did not last long. Reason again began to play its part, and a greater sense of reality was restored. The critical faculties had been temporarily taking a nap.

I delved deeply into theology, and as an antidote to sensationalism, I read considerably in philosophy.

But, frankly, I liked church work. In this particular there is nothing new. The Methodist Church, both Primitive and Wesleyan, has left a strong impression upon the mining community, particularly in England. It is true to say that in most of the English counties the old and many of the present-day leaders of the Miners' Federation

in many instances were, and are still, influenced by the Methodist Church.

At one time in the early 'forties the leaders of the miners were invariably local preachers, and those who fought hardest and best for the men ofttimes found their inspiration in the hard pews of the local Nonconformist church. They were called "Ranters" as a term of reproach.

And so it was in my case. After a year's experience in church work I decided to study for the Methodist ministry. In due course my name was inscribed upon the "plan" as a regular local preacher.

My first sermon was my first speech. It was odd that my text should be: "Come let us reason together, saith the Lord."

It is a unique experience to mount the pulpit for the first time to deliver therefrom a sermon of half an hour's duration. I had prepared my sermon some time in advance and built it up on orthodox lines. I had memorised a good deal of it, but decided at the last moment that I would not read any of it.

I have often thought of that first sermon. I delivered it with much greater ease and assurance than I have delivered many a speech since. As I spoke I began to feel that the matter was not wholly orthodox, although the manner was strictly in accordance with the traditions of the Church. Somehow or other I felt that the Christian gospel had to be translated into social service. At the same time I felt that my congregation was not wholly with me in my unorthodoxy.

This mentality characterised my efforts during the whole of my church work. I prepared for my examinations for the ministry. Before sitting, each candidate has to deliver a trial sermon. My turn came, and with it many misgivings.

The same unorthodoxy was a feature of my sermon. Result : an unfavourable reception and a reminder that it was something of a departure from the accepted canons of belief and style of declaration. I was ploughed. Our minister, long since passed away, was a stern believer in a literal hell. He invariably preached in a high temperature. We used to say we could hear the sinners sizzling twice every Sabbath when he was in the pulpit.

Curiously enough, I felt no spirit of resentment or bitterness against the Church over this result, although I had a strong feeling that the decision was wrong. My dreams of becoming a minister crashed to the ground. It was the certain knowledge that I should never be completely at ease within the then narrow limits of the Church creed that made me finally abandon the ministerial calling.

For consolation and the abatement to some extent of an inward restlessness I turned to Trade Union and social work, but despite the fact that I have spent many years in the Labour movement, from that day until now, I still like to associate myself with the Methodist church, its simple religious life and its social aspirations. There has been a great modification in the temper and tolerance of Methodism since first I

knew it. It is with feelings of real tenderness and affection that from time to time I enter the portals of the church to take part in the simple devotions of its members.

At the beginning of my Trade Union work I felt a great sense of mental and spiritual liberty. I was no longer fettered by theological formulæ or dogmatic creed, some of which in all probability had been of my own creation. Here was scope for boundless energy and limitless enthusiasm. Here was a task which would lead to an improvement of the lot of my fellow men in this very real world.

I have never regretted my decision to work for the Labour movement, for even at the start I realised that it was the only movement through which I could express the true inwardness of what I conceived to be religion. For here was the instrument of revolt ready for the using. Here was a means of industrial power. Here was the weapon of the poor and oppressed. I saw a new world of action opening up before my eyes.

The first job that I ever had in the Trade Union world was that of a member of the local pit committee, a position to which the miners at a particular colliery elect their representatives generally once every year.

It was a pit of considerable size and with quite a respectable output. The job brought me in contact with the management of the mine when local disputes came up for discussion, and it was with a sense of tremendous responsibility that I proceeded with the other members of the com-

mittee one day to meet the manager and his officials to discuss with them a local grievance. The manager was a strong yet withal a kindly man. His justness was his distinguishing trait. Yet a case had to be made out completely before he would make any concessions.

To do this was real work, and represents much that is best in Trade Union activity. Although it is work which generally gets no recognition whatsoever, it is in reality the backbone of Trade Unionism. It is the training ground of the negotiator. It provides a means for the balancing of facts—an instrument for the weighing of argument.

There are many men whom I have met in my industrial experience, who display in their Trade Union negotiations, in the mine, workshop, or factory, all the faculties of the most successful barristers, but who, through lack of opportunity and education, never have a chance of exercising those faculties in the wider sphere of social use. The world would have been much richer if they had had just the faintest educational or social opportunity. I never think of these men, but the lines of Gray come rushing through my mind :

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a rose was born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

In the course of a year the men appointed me to a joint committee, which was responsible for negotiating the disputes peculiar to the whole of the collieries under the Powell's Tillery Colliery

Co., Ltd., and in the end I became the secretary of this joint committee.

In this capacity one had to take part in leading the local strikes, of which there were many. It soon began to dawn upon me that sectional strikes never accomplish anything big. In the peculiar organisation of colliery life in those days, however, pit strikes or local strikes were absolutely indispensable in order to maintain the privileges and customs that had been won by pit-men of earlier days. In the event of a local dispute, the men would foregather at the pit-head, appoint a deputation to see the manager, but would generally get a refusal. This was followed by the men pouring out the tea from their drinking bottles—a sure sign that there would be no work that day. “Down tea” meant “down tools.”

From there I was elected as a representative upon the local Trades Council, where one was brought into contact with workers of other industries.

Life then assumed a thousand and one new aspects, each of which was of the greatest possible interest. The work was fascinating. Although one was invariably tired after the day's work underground, the mental recreation experienced in the evenings in the rough and tumble of Trade Union and social activity had a permanently good effect upon the mind.

The next thing to do, of course, was to embark upon the sea of politics proper. I joined the Independent Labour Party. This was at the age of eighteen.

The local branches of the Independent Labour Party were always centres of education and culture, more so perhaps than any other local organisations. The men gathered together week by week and discussed the political items of the day, probed deeply into social and industrial problems, read propaganda literature and took part in debates, and later went forth into the highways, byways and street corners to preach the gospel of Socialism.

It was by no means an easy undertaking to do this. The task of expounding the Socialist formulæ from the steps of the village pump, which was dangerously near the water, was a much more difficult one than that of preaching the gospel in the comparative security of the House of the Lord. But it was done.

Ofttimes the audiences were sparse and shy. Children and the village dogs frequently formed the crowd. One day I carried the banner into the adjoining village, only to be run out of it again on the very first declaration that I was a speaker representing the Independent Labour Party. The chase was long and full of excitement.

It was not a popular cause.

The comrades were not always well received. They were inspired by a kind of religious zeal in their work, and in the main became oblivious to obstacles of this description.

The most interesting feature of the Independent Labour Party open-air work was, and is now, question time. Sometimes one would cut one's speech short in order to enjoy the fun of question and answer.

My old friend of earlier days, my geological instructor, used to delight particularly in flooring the speakers with questions from the works of Herbert Spencer, that classic exponent of individualism. It was a glorious time, and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. Mixed metaphors were a part of our stock-in-trade. On one occasion I was ironically chaffing an interruptor, and said to the audience, " You see my friend has dropped the argument like dropping a hot brick, and why ? Because it will not hold water."

Later I was asked to go to speak in bigger towns, to bigger audiences, and this enriched my experiences beyond anticipation. I made a point of walking many miles to hear famous speakers ; to study their style and to understand their subject was my special ambition. It was on such an excursion as this that I first heard Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., Ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer. I little thought that one day I should sit side by side with him on the same Treasury Bench in the same Government. He became my inspiration ; my ideal. He remembers the occasion. We have talked about it since. Despite temporary obliquity and misunderstanding, I have never faltered in my belief in him. He is the greatest man in our Political Labour Movement.

The opportunity then came to study for a scholarship at Ruskin College, Oxford. For a year or so I had been keeping up correspondence lessons with the college, but now there was a possibility of my actually entering it as a resident

student for a period of two years. The yearning to be off was nearly overmastering.

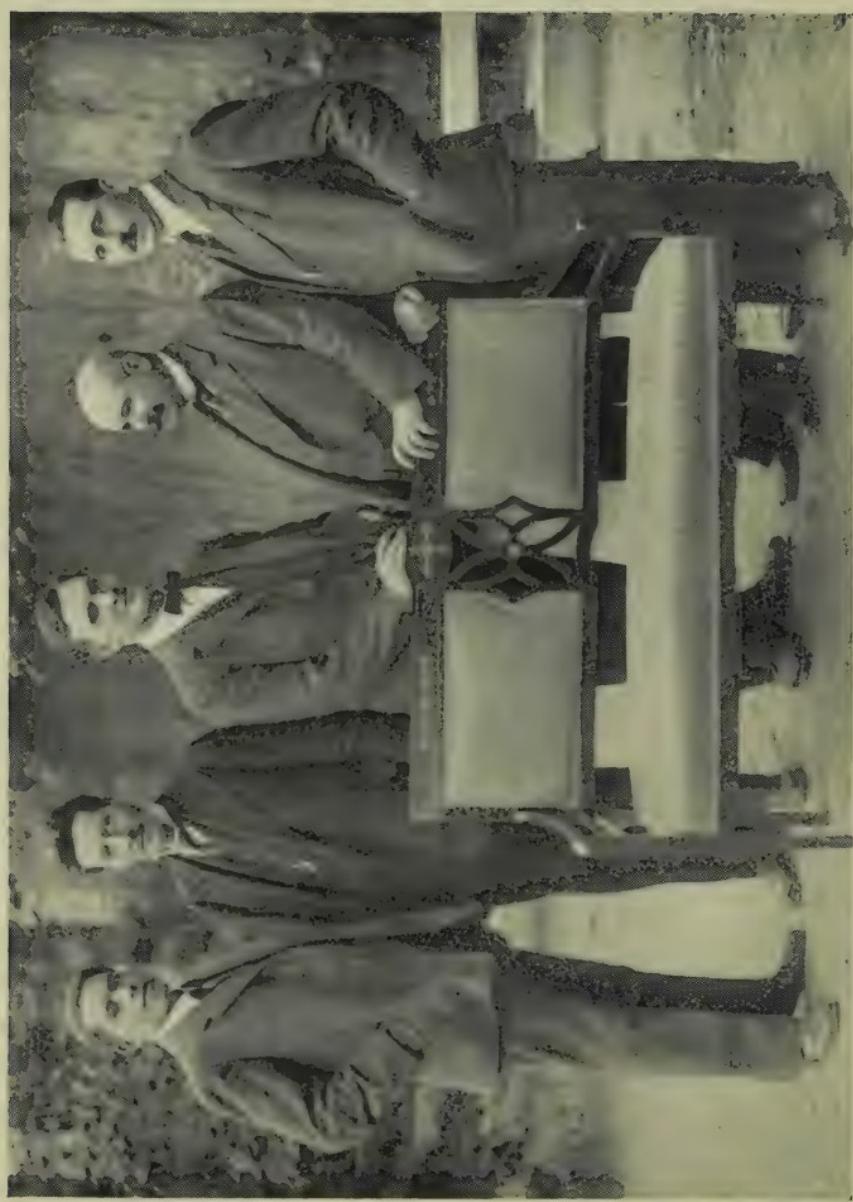
One of the most remarkable features about the mining community is their intense passion for education. This is characteristic of them throughout the whole of the country. The principal ambition of the average miner is not, as is sometimes supposed, rabbit coursing or horse racing, but to see his children well educated. He and his wife are ready to make the greatest personal sacrifice for this end.

The Western Valleys Mining District had always been specially keen upon spending some of its income on education, as indeed is the case in many another district.

For the purpose of educating some of the young men, they set aside a small sum per annum to enable the college fees to be paid for their young students, who, later, in their turn, came back and diffused the knowledge acquired in Ruskin College and, later, the Labour College, to a wider circle of miners who could, in the nature of things, never go to a college.

I shall always be grateful beyond expression for this special interest in the development of their young men, in which development I was later to fully participate. The time came for the examination of the candidates.

We were a group of applicants having to appear before a body of pit-men examiners. Each one of us was put through a very severe set of questions, and in the end we were reduced to two—my old friend, the late Captain Edward Gill, M.C., and myself.



IN MEMORY OF THE DAYS SPENT IN BUDAPEST, 9TH AND 10TH OCTOBER, 1921.

The Hungarian Federation of Miners.

My friend was elected, and I was rejected on account of my extreme youthfulness. I was delighted to find that he was successful. The rest of us were compelled to wait another two years before the opportunity presented itself again.

In the interval I threw myself with greater intensity into the work of the Labour movement, and when Captain Gill returned from his period of two years, the same body of examiners unanimously elected me to go to Ruskin College as a residential student without having again to go through the ordeal of an examination.

At the age of twenty-two I arrived at Oxford—glorious Oxford—which to me for years had been the ideal of human attainment, and which for the rest of my life I shall remember with generous affection.

Money was required for this adventure. I had worked hard at the coal-face to save up a sufficient sum to enable me to buy my books and to maintain myself with some small luxuries whilst living my life in Oxford.

I remember that I had saved nearly one hundred pounds, which I calculated, if spent with care, would last me until I was able to earn money again.

Students of Ruskin College and the Central Labour College of to-day are in a more fortunate position, for in many cases the Trade Union organisation which sends them there also provides them with a sum of money wherewith to buy their books and the smaller necessaries of college life. But even there, in

that sequestered part of the world, strife was no stranger.

It was at this college that I was again to participate in a strike, the character of which, I believe, is unique in the world of education.

The dismissal of the principal of the college, the late Mr. Dennis Herd, M.A., was the signal for an internal struggle.

The curriculum, according to his view, needed modifying, and he modified it accordingly. It was done without the consent of the governors, but in his action he was supported by nearly all the Trade Union students.

The tranquillity of Oxford was disturbed in a manner which had never been heard of before in that otherwise peaceful city, and the college became the centre of the attentions of the press of the world.

The planks in our programme were: (1) Reinstatement of the principal; (2) acceptance of the modified curriculum.

We were in mortal fear of being swallowed up by the University, with the consequential loss of our distinctive Labour characteristics. This we believed to be the policy of the governors and we resented it. The two years of Oxford life are replete with incidents displaying the deep antagonism existing in those days between the sons of the manual workers and the sons of the other classes of society. Some of these are well worth recording.

CHAPTER IV

PIT CLOGS IN OXFORD

THE streets of Oxford are none too broad and the pavements are very narrow. The undergraduates used to adopt the happy-go-lucky manner of linking arms as they walked along. When meeting a group of Ruskin College students they invariably tightened up and attempted to hustle them off the pavement or out of the street. But if the miner was bow-legged, he was brawny and brave.

This led to conflict. In a rough knock-about, sons of the pit, factory and workshop could always hold their own, and many a royal battle ensued as to which had the right to retain the pavement, or as to which should walk undisturbed for a little while longer along the high road. We sometimes won.

On one occasion, when the late Keir Hardie returned from a long tour in India, he spoke at the Oxford Town Hall. The undergraduates were lying in wait for him. He had been making speeches in India which appeared in the undergraduate mind to be contrary to a sound, conservative attitude. They accordingly prepared to roast him. A "rag" was organised.

The news of the plot leaked out. The students of Ruskin College enrolled themselves to a man as stewards to keep the peace. We took a solemn vow that Keir Hardie should speak.

The meeting opened. The undergraduates

groaned out in a monotonous sing-song voice : “ What about India ? What about India ? ” College cries crashed out. The din was infernal.

Mr. Keir Hardie appeared on the platform. This was the signal for a general demonstration of hostility. Flour bags, bad eggs, sneezing powder, and sundry other mysterious articles were hurled at him whilst he stood facing this wilful, care-free, hot-blooded, prejudiced gathering of youth.

I shall never forget his wonderful dignity in face of such opposition. What infinite patience ! What abysmal pity ! Calm and erect, pale-faced, burning-eyed, he stood there waiting to proclaim his gospel. He opened his mouth to speak, but his voice was lost in the terrific din.

The sons of Oxford would stone the gentle Apostle of Peace.

The undergraduates mounted their chairs, which stood in serried rows from the platform back to the principal entrance. One of the number shouted his orders, which gave the signal for a joint attack upon the platform. There was a moment’s pause.

This gave the stewards their chance. They ranged themselves quietly behind the last row of seats, and suddenly each steward took hold of the back legs of the chairs and pulled them from beneath the demonstrators.

The skittle alley effect was perfect. The first row went down with a crash, their impact with their neighbours immediately in front causing the latter to go down also, and so on, until the floor of the Oxford Town Hall presented a

struggling, seething, cursing mass of undergraduate humanity. Chaos was complete.

In the confusion Keir Hardie made good his escape by a back door, and we never saw him any more that day.

Quick to discern the cause of their discomfiture, the undergraduates made a mass attack upon the stewards. For a time we bravely held our own. Standing on top of the Town Hall steps, we held a point of vantage, and many of our opponents were literally thrown into the street as they came along.

The conflict was short and sanguinary. Battered, bruised and bleeding, we ran for our lives to Ruskin College for safety. We locked, bolted and barred the doors and barricaded the windows. The siege was soon in full swing. Though Ruskin College was no mediæval castle, we resorted to mediæval strategy. We poured boiling water from the roof on to the enemy below. This had the desired effect, but it was no means of ensuring the college windows against complete disaster.

Thus was the antagonism maintained, and, in the course of time, other exhibitions of our mutual dislike were displayed.

Occasionally we were invited to take part in the Union debates. This, of course, provided us with an opportunity of bringing out our best debaters. We would select our men to go to the Union to fight for our side, and, whenever possible, we were represented in the audience to cheer him on whether his performance was good, bad, or indifferent.

I say it with all due modesty, but I think it cannot be gainsaid that our debaters were as good as the best debaters that the Union was able to put up from the University side.

As far as I can remember, we never won in a vote on a motion, but the real joy lay in our efforts to down our opponents in actual debate.

We received generous encouragement and applause from our opponents if we scored a good point, or if our oratory was unusually good. The Union loves the grand manner in debate, and never fails to appreciate it to the very full. In short, there existed between us the characteristic magnanimity of youth.

The college to which we were attached had no scouts, manservants or maidservants. We could, however, boast of a cook. The students of Ruskin College had to do their own housework. Each was allocated a certain amount of daily house duty, a weekly list of duties being compiled, with the name of each student opposite his particular job.

Some men laid the breakfast table and served the breakfast ; others washed up the porridge pans and cleared away ; some were allocated to scrub the lecture hall and clean up the library ; still others were detailed off to scrub staircases, clean bathrooms, and generally keep the house in good order. The scrubbing out of the porridge pans was a sure cure for snobbery.

One day a young Frenchman turned up as a student. He was a poet. He wore a magnificent black beard. We became friends. Our great delight was to walk out in the afternoons into

the woods and hills. Whenever he got a new glimpse of Oxfordshire's beauty in the country-side, he would shout out in sheer ecstasy : " Monsieur François, admirez la Nature."

I helped to teach him English. He reciprocated by helping me with French. He was thoroughly impracticable, however, when it came to domestic duties. His first domestic duty was to scrub the staircase in one of the houses, on the landings of which abutted the rooms of many students.

He took a large pail of water to the topmost step, mop in hand, and from there, with a mighty swish, dashed the whole of the water down the staircase, hurriedly following it up with his mop.

The stream flowed in under the doors of the students, whose rooms by this time were spick and span. A howl of execration resounded through the house. A general rush was made towards the offender, whose beard became the central point of attack. He never repeated that homely duty in quite the same way. He learned readily.

Such was the kind of domestic life at both Ruskin College and the Central Labour College, the latter being the institution to which I went after the termination of the Ruskin College strike, for it was to that college that the dismissed principal betook himself with a number of students of Ruskin College who desired to go with him.

I was the first Trade Union student to be sent to this new college, the district to which I belonged having decided that they would transfer

their support from Ruskin College to the Labour College. The financial aid thus rendered was much appreciated at the time, but the college larder presented a pathetically thin interior.

The life was clean and wholesome, though hard. Not having any University status, we were never allowed to take part in University sports. We established our own sports. We played our matches, both football and cricket, more with the town teams than with the college clubs. Such social life as we had was spent in the company of townsmen rather than gownsmen.

Occasionally there were some very charming society people who made a point of inviting a certain number—not too many at a time—of these working-class students to their drawing-rooms for tea and conversation.

We stimulated curiosity ; we were a new species ; we amazed our hostesses ; we could even talk the King's English ; we could relate experiences of a world of which they knew nothing, of a life with which they had not come in contact.

We were very much patronised—but we took no notice. We had such enormous appetites, and were invariably hungry. Whilst proceeding to discuss in our delightfully dogmatic fashion the right of the State to confiscate the capitalist system, we never allowed the discussion to prevent us from confiscating all the glorious eatables that were laid before us.

We had many good friends, however, the memories of whom will last with us as long as the human mind can retain the impression of those days.

Money was slack ; books were needed, but could not often be bought. New clothes were out of the question, but we did occasional business with a secondhand dealer near Carfax. We often regaled ourselves by flattening our noses against the numerous bookshop windows of the "High." We hungered for knowledge, and in such a case an Oxford bookshop is the most fascinating place in the world. In spite of our limitations we held our own in educational progress with many of the better-placed University undergraduates.

We secured permission to attend University lectures, which we did in large numbers ; rubbed shoulders with men holding different opinions ; and thus almost insensibly assimilated much of the culture and learning of that glorious city.

For us the future was much different from the future of the undergraduate. For them was the big world of Commerce, Law, Civil Service, the Army, or the Church. For us it was almost inevitable that, after the completion of our term at the college, we should return to the actual jobs which we left before we went. For the undergraduate there were careers oftentimes planned and determined very long before by their parents, different from anything they had hitherto experienced. For us the life of the mine, factory, field, or shop, back to the old experiences and limited lives—for had we not taken a vow that we would return to live and work amongst those who had made our education possible ? We were educated to elevate our class, and not to be elevated out of it !

The days and months went by quickly. Our bodies had become loose and lithe; our minds had become charged with a new wealth of ideas. We had lived in a new world, but the old world was calling us back. The day for descending the mine again drew rapidly near.

It was going to be a tremendous test of loyalty that would compel us to retrace our footsteps back to the old environment, to live the life which we had temporarily abandoned, to readapt our bodies and souls to exigencies of the coal mine.

Nevertheless this was done by the great majority of the students. They were loyal to their kind. Only a very fractional percentage broke out to carve for themselves purely individualist careers. Strangely and justly enough, this fraction was never heard of in later years.

The storm and stress, and the excitement of the Ruskin College strike, laid me low quite early in my college life. I went down with pneumonia and pleurisy. Ruskin College then was no place for a very sick person. A guardian angel appeared.

I was taken away by a woman to her home, there to be nursed and cared for and gradually brought back to life. The gods never created a finer person than this woman. She was the quintessence of human kindness. A room in her house was turned into a hospital ward. My immediate attendants at the start were my two college chums. Never by day nor by night did they leave me to myself. My gratitude to all three is deep and lasting. I learned as I had

never learned before what depths of friendship there can be in the wells of the human soul.

My hostess learned on the second day that a nurse friend of hers had arrived in Oxford from India. She explained my case to the nurse, and with the same characteristic generosity as she had displayed herself, this nurse rendered me professional service spontaneously and freely until convalescence.

This woman was one of wide culture. She had a great knowledge of literature and languages. She had travelled in all parts of the world. She was a woman of intense energy, capable of stirring the most sluggish will into action, and of galvanising the most drowsy intellect into achievement.

She became attached to the students of the college, several of whom would foregather at her house for reading and discussion, and to improve their linguistic knowledge.

She took a class in French, and by dint of effort, enthusiasm and will power inspired the students in their studies of that beautiful language.

I am not a distinguished French scholar, but I speak and read the language tolerably well. This is entirely due to the work which this charming personality did during our college life. The knowledge thus acquired has been of inestimable value to me in later life, more particularly in my work as Secretary of the International Miners' Federation.

One mentions these wonderful people to indicate that in every walk of life there is some influence at work, some good spirit in existence,

which unsuspectingly urges us on to accomplishment, which comes into one's life in the most mysterious and accidental manner, and which leaves an ineradicable impress upon the whole of one's subsequent achievements.

The influence may be bad as well as good, but in my case it was certainly a great influence for good, and one which language fails fittingly and adequately to describe. Words are but a poor medium to describe the gratitude which the heart experiences in cases like these.

As a result of our keenness to take up the study of languages in our spare time, I decided upon going to Paris, where before the end of my college life I spent a period of three months. This again brought me newer experiences, and gave me contact with a form of life which up to that moment I had not conceived to be possible.

Here I was flung into the great world of international politics. Here I met the big figures in the world of affairs, and here I began to look at life in a broader and newer way. My adventures in Paris are among the most delightful of my life.

CHAPTER V

A MINER IN THE QUARTIER LATIN

OFF to Paris for three months, with only fifteen pounds to spend! It was going to be a hard struggle, but it would be worth it.

The Englishman is always described by the

foreigner as too insular, yet there is no people under the sun who desire more keenly to travel than the English. I was no exception to the rest of my race. At times, even now, it becomes a positive craving, though I have had a fair share of travel already, both in Europe and in America.

I had studied the language. I had read some of the literature. Molière, Racine, Chateaubriand and Anatole France had made me long to visit the country of such mighty traditions, to see the French people, to study their life and institutions, to hear the French language spoken in everyday conversation, to obtain as near as possible a proper pronunciation and a fuller use of French idiom and colloquialism, and finally to be in the land of the great revolutions.

I was accompanied by a student chum, who has since made good in the Trade Union world, and whom I consider to be one of the most promising young men in the South Wales coal-field—my friend Arthur Jenkins, miners' agent.

The feelings of real joy that I experienced when my feet touched the soil of France are beyond definition. The shouting of porters and interpreters at the Quay Boulogne moved me strangely, but we had no occasion to engage the services of one or the other; our luggage was light, and so were our purses.

Then on from Boulogne to Paris, where we were unknown. There was no friendly hand to greet us at the Gare du Nord. We had an address in our pockets and a few letters of recommendation. We were to stay at a little

working-class club which was more in the nature of a home than anything else. It boasted of the name "Foyer de l'Ouvrier," and was situated in the Rue Pas de la Mule, near the Place de la Bastille, in the heart of the working-class quarter.

The "Foyer" was in an obscure, mean little street. During a recent visit I discovered that it had gone over to the other side of the River Seine to a much better quarter. It was founded and run by a lady who had thrown herself into the work of providing homes for young working men whose occupations kept them in Paris, but whose homes were at remote distances, either in France or out of it.

The director of the establishment was a broad-minded and a big-hearted man who had the capacity for moulding and influencing in the right direction the young lives which came under his care. He was Monsieur Dupuy.

Our board and lodging cost only fifteen shillings a week. This was an excellent arrangement. It was thus possible arithmetically to see one's way through to the end of the three months on the fifteen pounds available, with just a little to spare for amusement.

At the Foyer de l'Ouvrier there was no English spoken, which was of the greatest possible benefit to us in acquiring easy conversation in the language. If one desires to learn a language, forget one's own.

Mornings were devoted to the exploration of that fascinating city, Paris. Afternoons we devoted to study and lessons in French grammar

and pronunciation. Evenings were always used up in the company of other members of the household in their play, in their sport, and in their social activities.

We lived plainly but healthily. Two nights a week our director, Monsieur Dupuy, gave us a great treat. He divided two bottles of *vin ordinaire* between fourteen thirsty men. Copious applications of water achieved this miracle. The deep red grew a ghastly pale, and the taste sagged. Nevertheless, it was an event to drink wine with the director.

We had not been long in residence before we were taken to the French Socialist Congress, which was being held at that time in Paris. There our letters of introduction brought us in contact with the big figures of the French Labour movement.

To my mind, no leaders were more interesting and attractive than Dr. Paul Lafargue and his wife, the daughter of Karl Marx.

Immediately upon our introduction, they invited us with characteristic generosity to go with them to spend a week-end at their country house in the tiny old-world village of Draveil, not far from Paris.

This was joy indeed. To be brought into direct contact with the last of Marx's children gave us much happiness. The hospitality that was bestowed upon us was generous to a degree, and which, after the hard life we had been experiencing in Paris, was particularly welcome. At their home we found young men and middle-aged men of all nationalities gathered together for the

same week-end. They were political exiles and refugees from the various countries of Europe, men who had been cast out from their national life because of their struggle for political freedom. The Lafargue home was a recognised refuge for the political exiles of Europe. Lafargue himself had been an exile. He understood and sympathised.

What an extraordinary man Lafargue was, and how brilliant was his wife, the daughter of Karl Marx. He, short of stature, dark of complexion, with head covered with a thick mass of white hair, beloved by the people, elected *député* whilst in prison ; she, tall, straight, well-built, of commanding appearance, an arresting figure in the Socialist movement of the time. Both of them had lived through that most interesting period of French history associated with the Paris Commune. Cultured to the very last degree ; possessing a knowledge of languages which seemed at that time to be beyond the attainment of the ordinary mind ; acquainted with the political movements, both secret and open, peculiar to each country in Europe, they were, indeed, the most fascinating couple any young people could meet.

At eventide the guests were assembled on the balcony of the house, overlooking an old-world garden, bathed in moonlight, hushed by the sweet silence of the French countryside. We were invited, each in turn, to sing a song of our country. There were Italian, Spanish, Russian, French and English songs sung that night, most of which related to some national effort to secure

A HAPPY FAMILY.

Photo: Farringdon Photo Co.



freedom of thought and liberty of action. Exiles could not have sung other songs. The hours thus passed away, the songs being interspersed with tales of adventure, of escapes from prison, of plots and counterplots, all of which had an awakening effect upon our receptive minds.

Later, Lafargue was to introduce us to other prominent men in the world of French politics. He introduced us to Jean Jaurès, the greatest political leader the French Labour movement has ever had, and to other notabilities in Paris, who took a special paternal interest in us while we were there.

I was so charmed by the personalities of Lafargue and his wife that I did my best to invite them to come back to England in order that they might meet the younger members of the British Labour movement.

There was something infinitely sad in the reply that I received to the effect that "we shall never see England any more."

I was tragically shocked to read a few days after my return to England that Dr. Lafargue and his wife had been found dead together in the very house in which we were entertained. They had passed simultaneously out of this life in their sleep. They had resolved to die together when they felt that their faculties were dimming and their period of useful service was coming to an end.

Lafargue was a doctor ; consequently he knew how to accomplish this in peace. This was suicide.

Thus passed away the last of the children of Karl Marx, another of whom, earlier, had married a doctor and, in her turn, had come to a premature death by suicide.

Jaurès was a man of action, and the greatest orator I have ever heard. His eloquence was volcanic. He was fruitful in ideas, and expressed them in a veritable cascade of words. He was the embodiment of all that is vital and magnetic in great orators.

I attended a sitting of the Chamber of Deputies when he was going to speak. The French Chamber of Deputies is unlike the British House of Commons in many respects. There is not the same sense of order, the same decorum in debate, the same overmastering authority of the Speaker.

There half a dozen orators would be on their feet at once, delivering themselves of their views whether they were being listened to or not. Imprecations would be hurled at the Speaker at the Tribune. Demonstrations of violence occurred in the Chamber itself. Private conversations were carried on in audible tones during the speeches.

Speaker after speaker mounted the Tribune, but their words could not be heard. The din was deafening, when Jaurès was called upon to speak. His broad, burly figure elbowed its way through the crowd to his place at the Tribune.

Immediately the noise ceased. Members sat back in their places. He began his oration. His voice was tense with suppressed passion. His ideas were startling in their clearness, although

his abundant use of idiom oftentimes compelled us to miss some of the subtle *nuances* of his thought.

He spoke for three-quarters of an hour on France and her *rôle* in the world as a great missionary of culture and peace. At the end of his address the whole chamber rose to its feet, friends and enemies alike, and cheered him to the echo.

It is a sad reflection that this great mind, this potent influence in French life, should have been destroyed by a bullet at the outbreak of war.

Had he lived, French history may have been different. It is impossible to say definitely. But a shot from an assassin ended a life which, had it continued, would have been recorded as one of the greatest civilising and humanising influences in French history.

By this time we had thrown in our lot with the French working-class movement. We were regular attendants at the Socialist meetings in our *arrondissement* or constituency.

I took part in a by-election and enthusiastically joined the many processions which characterise elections in Paris. We marched through the boulevards and streets to the places of meeting, singing songs and cheering the candidate.

At the meetings both men and women took part. The French workman is a natural orator, but in downright passion and fury of statement the Frenchwoman leaves him dumb.

One could always picture after that how the women of the first Revolution of 1789 must have stung the lethargic crowds into activity, even

the activity of the guillotine, by their passion in declamation.

Meetings in the Quartier St. Antoine, the working-class quarter of Paris, were regularly frequented, until we assimilated a great deal of the French mentality. There were no idle moments.

The French Labour movement will never be quite the same as the British Labour movement. Its passion is too intense and too effervescent. It is a mentality of quick though not sustained action. It is a movement which loves the spectacular. It will never be as orderly, as disciplined, as effective in detail as the British Labour movement. This is only natural. It is a question of temperament.

Happy days were spent in the Latin quarter. We were admitted to the charmed circle of Bohemians, not because of any special introductions, but because we had the two primary qualifications. One was that we were poor, and, secondly, we were actually engaged in the *rôle* of students.

Life in the Bohemian quarter of Paris is gay and fascinating. If there are cares and anxieties, they pass unnoticed. Happy, care-free, joyous youth abounds everywhere. We mixed with the young artists, both in painting and in music. Riotous nights we lived through without regret.

The fun was wholly innocent. Limited funds kept us within the limits of probity.

Sunday afternoons were devoted to visits to the Louvre, or to St. Cloud, or to Versailles. We always went with the workers when taking their Sundays off. Our sightseeing was always done

on foot. There is no better way of seeing the sights of Paris, or, for that matter, the points of interest in any town, than by walking.

One of the features of Sunday which struck me with particular force, and which gave me an insight into the character of the Parisian workman, was his sheer delight in taking his family to wander through the galleries of that great treasure house of the world, the Louvre. He would spend hours in the building explaining to his children the various objects of interest ; then he would take them to the gardens and parks to listen to the fine music. As a special treat, he would take them to a popular *café*, where all could sit down together and enjoy a meal and wine. He is a great man for his children. They are not numerous.

I confess that during my stay I saw no drunkenness whatsoever. The French *café* does not lend itself so readily as the English public-house to drinking such quantities as make for drunkenness. The *café* habit promotes temperance, and it would be well for that habit to develop in this country.

The months were slipping by and preparations had to be made for our return. Before the end I had cultivated a real affection for the country and its people, an affection which still persists.

Whatever criticism we may now make of French policy or of French action, it is always tempered by a recognition of the fine qualities of French people, of their contribution to the progress and culture of the world, of their art, of their science, of their achievement.

The lessons we learnt are lasting. One's judgment of foreign affairs is bigger and better in consequence of that interesting experience.

It would, indeed, be a fine thing if all men who, in later years, have to take part in large degree, or even in a small degree, in the moulding of the affairs of the world, could have the opportunity early in life of living for reasonable periods in each of the larger and more important countries of Europe, imbibing the ideas of those countries and assimilating their points of view.

It is, indeed, the indispensable training ground for those who have to exercise judgment in international affairs.

CHAPTER VI

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A COAL HEWER

HOME again ; back to England and to the mine ; college days over ; once more facing the grim realities of a miner's life.

The lecture-room left behind ; the research of the student to give place to the swing of the pick.

To leave the sheltered cloisters of Oxford for the grim gallery of the underground meant a wrench which gave real pain, but had I not promised my old friends, had I not resolved in my heart, that whatever happened in my college life I would go back to live amongst my

people, and as far as in me lay give them the benefit of whatever education I had acquired.

The first difficulty to be overcome was how to get a job. Funds were exhausted ; there were no means of support except by getting a job at the coal face.

I approached the manager of the old pit in which I had worked from boyhood, expecting that I should be taken on without question or qualification.

Alas ! how strange are the ways of colliery proprietors ! To my astonishment I was met with a downright refusal. Had I not been to Ruskin College ? Had I not been educated in a working-class school ? Had I not associated myself with an institution which was turning out educated young men whose business it was to elevate the lot of their fellow men upon their return ?

I do not blame the manager. Of all the colliery managers I have ever met he was the broadest-minded and the most practical in the industry. He was compelled to refuse me by direction of his head office—by the orders of those who knew far less about the management of men than he did himself.

My fellow workmen took up my case, with the result that after prolonged discussion and much delay I got a job in a mine in the same district as that which I had left. There was much ado about nothing.

What a contrast ! Deep down in the bowels of the earth, in a place which had not been working for many a long month ; with a roof

completely fallen in, concealing the whole of the coal face. Timbers to be erected, roof to be made safe, and fallen rubbish to be cleared away before one could even catch sight of the black diamonds beyond.

Tools appeared to be unusually heavy, and were handled clumsily. The art of the skilled hewer had disappeared. The body, made lithe and straight by the athletic life of Oxford, had to assume a cramped position. Hands were tender, and, after a day or two, were blistered and bleeding.

But there was no respite. In the abysmal depths and darkness one's mind invariably went back to the sunny days of Oxford, the simple gaiety of France. There could be no concentration in the old sense upon one's work. The faculty for concentration on this form of work had vanished.

No one can understand fully what this meant. There was the anguish of the body, the torture of the soul. Those who live in a colliery village and those who work in a coal mine alone can understand.

A day in the life of a miner will never be understood except by those who have lived it through, although for many subsequent years one has endeavoured to portray it to those otherwise employed.

Of men engaged in and about the coal mines of Britain there are now over 1,200,000, and of those 800,000 toil in the bowels of the earth. They are the toilers of the underground; the much criticised; the most abused.

If the miner is of those who work on the morning shift—from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m.—he is generally out of bed by five o'clock or half-past. Those who live long distances from the pit must get up even earlier. This means—in the winter months—that he is up long before daylight.

Whilst donning his working clothes and putting on his pit boots, his good wife prepares his scanty breakfast. The favourite dish is a rasher of bacon or a kippered herring. But perhaps it only runs to bread and jam.

The wife fills his tea-jack and his dinner-box and all is ready for work. They kiss each other good-bye—he to trudge through the darkness in winter to the mine, whilst she turns to the daily round of domestic toil and to await his return.

After his morning tramp, ofttimes through hail, rain, or snow, he arrives at the pit-head. He proceeds straight away to the lamp station at the pit top. He lines up in the queue with his mates at the appropriate lamp-room window, calls out his number, receives his lamp—oil or electric as the case may be—and passes on.

He takes one long pull at his pipe, searches his pocket for matches, and slyly takes them to a secret hiding-place somewhere about the surface, there to await his arrival at the end of the shift. He has been known to be observed.

It is now 6.15 to 6.30 a.m. Again he lines up in the queue, or, as the Welsh miner calls it, “the Goot.” The shaft may be deep—shafts vary from 600 to 2,700 feet in depth—the winding engine may be slow, or the cages may be small.

He must, therefore, await his turn for the descent. In a modern mine there may be 2,000 men descending on the morning shift. Technically his shift has not yet begun.

Eventually his turn arrives to step on to the cage. The gates clang behind him, a bell rings, he takes in at a glance the objects within his vision at the pit-head, the cage lifts off the "keps," and he gives a thought to his loved ones and then sinks with great speed deep down in the earth's crust.

Suspended by only a wire rope, he and his mates await the touch of the cage at the pit bottom. Is it not natural that he should look forward to the time when he will again see the light of day? He wonders whether ever again he will see his family.

Arrived there, the men step briskly off the cage, and in winter make their way without pause into the workings. In summer, however, the pace is slower, and for a simple reason. The sudden descent in summer from the sunshine into the inky blackness of the mine makes it necessary for the miner to take a rest until he gets his "pit eyes," as he terms it, or, in other words, until his eyes get accustomed to the gloom.

He has not gone many yards before he has to halt to have his lamp finally tested by a competent person. It must be securely locked, the glass must be so tight as to make it an instrument of safety in the presence of gas.

Sometimes a surprise search is made at the pit bottom for matches or cigarettes, which may have been left in their coats by the workmen.

If any are discovered the man is immediately sent up the pit and afterwards prosecuted in the police court.

It is the opinion of some that such surprise searches ought to take place on the surface as the men are stepping on to the cage, rather than down below, stepping off.

He is now ready to proceed in-bye, or into the workings.

In a colliery of twenty years old or upwards this is usually a tedious business, involving as it does a further walk of a couple of miles up or down roadways with very steep gradients.

The best engineering practice is now to provide little underground trains of tubs which permit the men to ride to a spot much nearer the scene of their activities. This method conserves the men's productive energy. But it is rather the exception than the rule.

The "hewer" is now at his working place. The fireman or deputy has been before him, to examine it for gas, breaks in roof, falls, and so on. The practical man is not content with this. He goes himself to make an examination for gas, and of roofs and sides, before he will allow his helper or boy to go in, puts up a prop under a dangerous stone, and declares all to be ready to begin.

If the seam of coal is thin or hard to obtain, the hewer, in the absence of coal-cutting machinery, settles himself down to "hole" under the coal.

"Holing" is the name given to the work of under-cutting the seam for a distance ranging

from 6 to 12 yards in length, and from 2 feet to 6 feet underneath. The hewer oftentimes lies on his side for this operation, and from this position—but after long practice—can dexterously swing his pick for hours at a time undercutting the coal.

He effectively prevents this mass of coal falling upon him as he nears completion by the use of sprags or chocks of timber which gradually take up the weight. When he has finished, his helper throws the loose *débris* from the “holing” behind him and stows it in the gob or goaf, leaving the floor clean, ready to receive the coal when it falls.

If the “holing” has been soft, he is ready to get his coal down in a few hours. If it has been hard and tough, the “holing” process may last all day, and in such a case the coal would not be felled until the next shift.

Ofttimes the roof is bad, sly and dangerous and he is frequently interrupted in his work to secure the safety of himself and helper by extra propping.

In wet mines he is compelled to work lying down on wet floors to do this skilled “holing.” I have actually experienced the discomfort of working underneath a stream of water breaking through a crack in the roof.

By 10.30 a.m. it is snack time. The miner and his helper repair to the bottom of the roadway, there to meet the men from the adjoining places.

They sit down to their simple fare. There is no washing of hands. They eat their bread and grime together. The law only permits an interval

of twenty minutes for this subterranean repast. In many districts a sturdy miner says grace. The meal begins. In ten minutes it is all over.

A further ten minutes are taken in discussion, debate or gossip. A few crumbs are left for the mice who await their turn sitting on the rails or timber close by. The workmen then separate, each to his proper working place, for the rest of the shift.

The "hewer" promptly loosens one sprag or chock after another, and then finally withdraws them. The pressure of the roof plus the huge mass of overhanging coal creates a tearing sound which delights his heart ; he steps back into a place of safety, and down it crashes.

Both miner and helper set to work to put the coal into tubs, and as quickly as possible the hewer makes a place to erect a prop under the piece of roof left exposed by the fall of coal.

It is oftentimes the case, however, that the coal does not fall even when "holed." It "sticks" to the roof, of which it is sometimes an integral part. In such a case, the miner and his helper have to bore one or two shot holes in the coal of varying depth from 2 to 4 feet, which are charged and stemmed with powder ready for the coming of the shotman, who explodes them by electric current.

The filling of the coal, the putting up of timber, the ripping down of the roof to make roadways, go on until nearly 2 p.m.

The miner is physically exhausted. Working at great intensity, at high temperatures from 70 degrees to over 80 degrees, inhaling an

atmosphere heavily charged with coal dust, oft-times stripped to the waist with no apparel save short pants and clogs, his energy is at a low ebb when he walks the long roadway once again back to the pit bottom. Trains of full tubs dash by him on his way.

Up the shaft into God's sunshine and fresh air. Picks must go to the blacksmith's shop, lamp to the lamp-room. Pipe found and relit; then off on the homeward trudge, with clothes hardening with the sweat of the day.

Wives and mothers await the homecoming. Children greet their fathers. The grimy hands clasp those of the bairns, and blackened lips greet rosy ones.

Despite the ofttimes wretched houses in which the miner lives, his home is clean and sweet. A good wholesome meal has been prepared for him. He washes his hands, partakes of his meal, and prepares to bathe.

It is now 3.30 to 4 p.m. If he can he takes a nap, then off to a meeting, the chapel, the club, the pub, or, once a week, to the pictures, according to his humour, habit or fancy.

At 9.30 he takes his supper with his family and retires to sleep. It is the dead sleep of the tired and exhausted body. In yet a few hours, again the "knocker up" will rudely awaken him to again perform the daily and dangerous toil.

He has no summer holidays with pay. In pre-war days a week in Blackpool was his one purple patch in life.

In the presence of danger and death he displays the courage of a lion. He is always in

the trenches. In temperament he is genial and sympathetic. In his family life he is extremely affectionate. He is very human.

He is a bonny fighter in all spheres. Generals pay him homage for valour on the field of battle. Civilians admire his tenacity of purpose. He is slow to engage in strife, but once in it he is not easily shaken off. Such is the character of his work, and such the man.

CHAPTER VII

THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

MY weekly wage for this work in a full week was forty shillings. It was far from adequate. In the evenings, when the day's work was done, I gathered round about me the young men of the town. I began to carry out my original resolve.

Classes were organised in industrial history, political economy, and English. Forty or fifty students attended each of these classes. They were conducted without remuneration, without reward.

What with the physical strain of the day and the mental effort of the night, my body cracked. Once again I fell seriously ill.

I was cared for by my parents. I was nursed by my sweetheart, now my wife—one who had years before inspired me to go forward; who had urged me to go to Oxford; who was pre-

pared to wait for me until I was ready to enter definitely upon my life's work.

Through her constancy and sacrifice I was restored to health and ready again for the inevitable mine. Again wages were being earned, though scanty in amount. Soon after we were married, and a new element entered into my life.

The struggle was now intensified, but it only served to call up new hopes and aspirations ; new resolutions.

At this stage a piece of good fortune came my way. I was invited by the Education Committee of the Monmouthshire County Council to become a member of their teaching staff and to conduct one of the technical classes in their night schools. The subject that was given me was the tuition of French. I took classes of young people twice weekly in this subject.

And not only young people. There were people in the scholastic profession who desired to improve their knowledge of that language. How receptive were their minds. How quickly they assimilated the knowledge I had to impart !

For that work I received £35 for the session. In consequence, I was able to reduce my working days in the mine from six to four and four and a half. The new time at my disposal enabled me to correct answers, to read through essays and to set questions. During these days I was back again in the old atmosphere of culture and of mental activity.

Happy and interesting though it was, it could not last indefinitely. The spectacle of a working

miner working four days in the week underground, and two days a week as a teacher of a foreign language, may appear to be attractive and romantic, but to one who felt there were even bigger things to accomplish, it became oft-times irksome and disheartening. The physical and mental strain was terrific.

There was abundant activity in the Trade Union world locally, and apparently endless work in the political world. I took a full share of the work in these two spheres—speaking, lecturing, undertaking industrial negotiations, conducting conferences and settling disputes with the employers.

The days were too short and the nights were too long to enable me to accomplish the things that must perforce be done.

One morning my wife, who saw more clearly than any one the effect of this upon my physical well-being, read an advertisement in the South Wales newspapers inviting applications for the position of a miners' agent in another part of Wales—in the county of Glamorgan, and in the Garw district thereof.

What a strange circumstance was this! A simple newspaper advertisement scanned by an anxious eye, the reception of which changed the course of my whole life!

A miners' agency in a Welsh-speaking area! £3 10s. a week! A new world was opening up, a world of new interests, new responsibilities, the beginning of a full and active life in the interests of one's fellow men.

I applied for the post. Candidates were

required to appear before the District Committee in person. I received an invitation. How was I to go? At that moment I had no money to pay my fare. The mining industry had just passed through a six weeks' strike for a national minimum wage. I was out of funds.

Even in the darkest moment a ray of light appears. Never before had I realised the truth of the old saying : "Every cloud has a silver lining."

I met an old friend, now dead, to whom I explained the situation. He lent me a pound to pay my fare to attend the meeting of the District Committee. No pound has ever been more acceptable to any man. He kept a fried-fish shop. My respect for these is permanent.

In due course I appeared. The *bona fides* of my candidature were accepted. To my amazement I found there were seventeen other candidates, nearly all of whom could speak both English and Welsh. In those days it was supposed to be a great advantage to be able to speak to the miners of Wales in their native tongue. I had not this advantage.

As far as possible we were all to appear upon the same platform to make a speech, express our views upon the state of the industry, indicate our plans for the solving of its problems, outline a new programme for the members thereof, and generally show how superior were our qualifications to those of our fellow candidates.

I was a stranger in a strange land—no friends ; few acquaintances. There were one or two, how-

ever, who had met me at miners' conferences when I was a simple miner delegate from the coal face.

They undertook to give me hospitality in their homes. Their houses were my headquarters. I toured the district, made my speech, thanked my hosts, and went back home to await results.

I explained to my wife that I stood no chance. The Welsh-speaking Welshmen were too many for me. The language factor had overwhelmed me. Still, I felt that I was making good speeches and was conveying a good impression.

The ballot for the post was one for every individual member to participate in. This took some weeks. Meanwhile I was back in the mine, hewing my ton of coal, meeting my fellow men near the coal face at meal times, still teaching them what I had learned, even coaching them deep down in the mine to sing "*La Marseillaise*."

Whilst waiting to ascend the mine at the end of the day's work we assembled in little groups at the pit bottom, and, much to the manager's annoyance, indulged ourselves in song, poem, and recitation whilst waiting for the signal to ascend.

I had almost forgotten that the election was proceeding for the miners' agency, when one day, at an odd moment, I saw a lamp coming towards me along the roadway to my working-place. It was carried by the underground haulier, who, on this occasion, had no horse and no tub. He seemed agitated and flustered as he dashed towards me.

I could see that he carried something in his hand. It was a telegram and—addressed to me,

I opened it, and found to my joy that it was from the secretary of the Garw district, informing me that I had been successful in the ballot, with a majority on the first count over all the other candidates put together. In short, I had been elected?

For the moment I was staggered. I could not believe it. There must be some mistake. Was I in reality a miners' agent or an underground hewer?

I re-read it. It was true. I was the youngest miners' agent in the country—I was twenty-four years of age. My haulier friend was in ecstasy. He congratulated me a thousand times. I said to myself: "Shall I continue my work here for the day and go up the shaft with the rest of my fellow men, or shall I collect up my tools and proceed to the pit bottom? Shall I leave the hazards and dangers behind me and bid farewell to my life as an actual miner, or go on and run the risk of an accident?"

I looked at the coal face. It looked more venomous at that moment than ever before. I decided to quit—at once.

The haulier carried my tools to a tram ready to take them to the pit bottom. I put on my clothes, took one long look around, and said "Farewell!"

At the pit bottom I met the manager, informed him of the news, and was again congratulated. I went up the shaft into the sunshine, never again to go back to that mine to engage in the actual work of coal-hewing.

Out into the big, bright, rosy world to engage

in the task to which I had felt myself drawn from the very beginning : to accept the obligations of office ; to give to my fellow men that which I believed I possessed ; to work in a bigger sphere ; to tread a road which would lead to achievement—not purely personal achievement, but achievement which might have great and far-reaching consequences for the miners of this country.

Into this big world I then stepped. Though my experiences had been varied, complex, fascinating up to that point, I was to enter into a world yet unknown, yet unexplored—into a circle ever widening in its character, fraught with all the possibilities of good or evil.

It is of this world that I would now write.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ENGLISHMAN ON WHEELS—IN WALES

THE job of a popularly elected miners' agent is varied and full of interest. One never knows exactly what is going to happen from day to day.

I heard a cynical colleague once say that the only thing of which the miners' agent was certain was a big funeral. The Welsh miners specialised in *cortèges*.

Here was I, the youngest miners' agent in the country, in a district thoroughly Welsh in character, the customs and practices of which I had immediately to learn.

Like many other districts in the South Wales coalfield at that time, this one was very badly organised. Comparatively few men were in their Union, employers had got the whip hand, the Minimum Wage strike of 1912 had emptied the district coffers. There was, therefore, no effective resistance to encroachments on the workmen's rights, privileges, and customs.

There were six thousand men in this district altogether, only two thousand of whom were in the organisation. My first task, therefore, was to restore the confidence of the men in their Trade Union, and build up a sound organisation so that in as short time as possible an improvement in their conditions of employment might be secured.

I hit upon the plan of taking each colliery separately, to give it special attention, to concentrate upon it. To this end I met the men at the pit-head at 5 a.m., before the descent of the morning shift. We held mass meetings, either on the colliery premises or adjacent thereto.

Men had to be persuaded, argued, coaxed back to their organisation. This method of the miners' agent appearing regularly at the pit-head was novel. The men grew interested. They flocked back, and the organisation gradually got vigorous.

On one occasion a colliery manager came to me whilst I was engaged in this task of addressing the men at the pit-head and ordered me off the colliery premises. I refused to go. He was a fiery, red-bearded, peppery Scotsman—at least, that was how he appeared to me. No

Welsh miner likes to be bossed by a Scot. He was not popular.

He threatened me with expulsion by force. I replied that rather than have a scene I would go. I went—and all the men went with me. They were wonderfully loyal. This caused a stoppage for several days.

In the end he grew more reasonable. We made mutual concessions. The men resumed work, remained in their Union to a man, and the company improved their conditions of employment in consequence.

The manager and I soon afterwards became quite good friends, and co-operated to the best of our ability to ensure that the undertaking of which he was manager was successfully worked.

After this the police became quite vigilant in their attentions to me when I was engaged in similar work in other collieries. My district presented me with a motor cycle, with which to expedite my early morning travels. The police inspector was also presented with a motor cycle.

Living not far from the police station, he could always hear me as I started out on my early morning round of propaganda. In a minute he was by my side. We thereupon raced along the country roads to my destination.

His job was to prevent me from causing scenes and disturbances at the colliery, but he had a sense of humour and great tact. As a matter of fact, I do not remember ever having created a real physical disturbance at any colliery, but I suppose colliery proprietors

thought my presence might cause one to break out at any moment.

So the work went on, the police invariably exercising the greatest possible discretion in carrying out their duties. It was my good fortune to be guarded and watched by some of the very best types of our provincial constabulary.

In the course of six months the district was well organised. In the course of a year the membership had increased from two thousand to six thousand, at which point it remained until I left it.

Then began a long period of local colliery struggles. I never deliberately provoked a fight—in fact everything was done to prevent one.

A miners' agency provides a capital training ground for those who in later years have to assume responsibility in the bigger sphere of Trade Union and political work. It teaches one the art of negotiation when negotiations are necessary ; it enables one to study the varied mentalities of the managers and directors of industrial concerns ; it provides the opportunity for a detailed study of the mentality of the masses. A knowledge of men is indispensable to successful leadership.

It involves one in quick judgment and quick decision. One has to weigh up the value of struggle as compared with negotiation and conference.

After the preliminary struggles, however, I was able to secure much more for the men by argument and the presentation of a reasonable case than by the cruder weapon of the strike.

For the first couple of years as a miners' agent I was only associated with colliery disputes and negotiations, but my contact with the world of industry was inevitably taking me into wider spheres of experience, thought, and action.

I became a member of the Executive Committee of the South Wales Miners' Federation, and in that capacity took part in the work not only of framing the policy of the South Wales miners in relation to their own employers, but in strengthening the ties between that organisation and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and the rest of the Trade Union world.

CHAPTER IX

THE BIRTH OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

IT was the South Wales Miners' Federation which first conceived the idea of the establishment of a new form of Trade Union organisation, afterwards to be known as the Triple Alliance ; and at a miners' conference held in Scarborough just before the war, I was delegated to submit the case for the formation of a Triple Alliance.

This was a great responsibility. It involved a tremendous departure from the recognised traditions and the practices of Trade Unionism.

Hitherto great organisations like those of the miners, the railwaymen, and the transport workers had always fought their fights separately,

and without any regard for the interests of the other. A strike of railwaymen immediately brought the mines and the docks to a standstill, although the workers in those industries had no grievance of their own at the time.

A little later the miners would be on strike. The dockers and the railwaymen would immediately be affected, although at that time they, in their turn, had no grievance with their employers.

And so it went on, one section of workmen innocently suffering whilst the others were waging their industrial battles.

But this would all be stopped under the operation of the new scheme. These three great organisations would submit their claims for improvement in wages and conditions of employment one to the other before action was taken.

Efforts would be made to co-ordinate those claims, so that if a strike became necessary in consequence of the failure of one or all three to secure their demands, then, on an appointed day, the whole of the membership of the three organisations would down tools.

It was a formidable idea, but it was adopted unanimously by the miners' conference, and soon after was licked into constitutional shape.

In later years I was to witness how, when it came to the test of practice, it failed. It failed on a day which has since been described as "Black Friday," a day which witnessed the complete break-up of what promised to be the most potent Trade Union weapon which had ever been forged.

But of that I shall write later.

Both at its birth and at its death I was seriously involved, although its death was much more interesting than its birth, because it was surrounded by the most dramatic circumstances that have ever befallen the history of the Trade Union movement.

The year 1914 was the year of the greatest significance to the Trade Union movement. It is the year in which nearly all the great Trade Unions contemplated embarking upon a new and gigantic struggle. All the achievements of the previous decades were to be consolidated ; a universal minimum wage was to be established ; a mighty effort was to be put forward to secure reductions in the length of the working day ; and the Triple Alliance was to be the active dynamic agency in it all.

Then came the outbreak of war, with all its important consequences to this country and to the world. The workman's mind turned from battle in the industrial arena to the more deadly and grim battle with the foreign foe.

Industrial schemes and plans were set aside, though not for good. All parties began to concentrate upon the things that were more vital. Employers and workmen mutually resolved to suspend their quarrels and differences while the nation was involved in the greatest of all historical struggles.

For a little while this spirit of fraternity held good, and then it suddenly weakened and broke up. In the coal trade the workmen had informed the coalowners that they would not press for advances in wages while the nation was at war

if they, in their turn, would keep down the price of coal to pre-war level.

This proposal, however, did not mature, and in 1915, when the then existing agreement came to an end, a strike took place.

It was a critical moment at which to conduct a strike. The situation in France was difficult in the extreme.

I had been urging the workmen to secure the maximum production of coal, bend their energies to the task of maintaining continuity of supply both for the Allies and for home use ; but now we had arrived at a point where apparently no agreement could be reached in time to avoid a cessation of work.

The Government intervened. Sir Walter Runciman, then President of the Board of Trade, interviewed the parties. Terms of settlement were suggested. Many of my colleagues considered the terms, though inadequate, sufficient to warrant a continuation of work.

In my opinion, at that time they were hopelessly inadequate. I could see that no settlement could be arrived at in a panic. Panics are bad things in industrial troubles.

I resisted the terms. They were rejected. The stoppage lasted ten days. Mr. Lloyd George, the Minister of Munitions, then paid a flying visit to Cardiff. In the course of twenty-four hours terms were agreed upon which were accepted by the men—terms which formed the basis of an agreement which lasted for the remainder of the war, during which time production continued uninterruptedly.

Looking back upon those days, one can see now that it was better to have the struggle then and secure continuity of employment for the remainder of the war than to have had the dissatisfaction and distrust which would have led to stoppages on more than one occasion during even more critical moments in the remaining three years of the war.

This dispute gave me for the first time the opportunity of studying Mr. Lloyd George at close quarters. I was much impressed by his astonishing vitality, his alertness of mind, the alacrity with which he grasped the essential points. He was as a dazzling flame compared with the feeble candle-light of Sir Walter Runciman.

But it struck me as being somewhat unfair to the latter, and subsequent events proved that my judgment in this case was confirmed.

Runciman had proceeded along definite lines of approach to a settlement. I have no doubt that he walked within certain fixed limits. He did his best within those limits, but the best was a very poor affair.

At the moment when the crisis became most intense, in stepped Mr. Lloyd George. He was accompanied by the ex-Home Secretary Mr. Arthur Henderson. The Park Hotel, Cardiff, is the scene of that historical gathering, and one can see photographs of the ministers still hanging in the hall of that hotel.

With one wave of the hand, so to speak, the maximum efforts of Runciman were brushed aside. A brand new set of terms were agreed upon.

Mr. Lloyd George emerged from the council chamber as the great industrial peacemaker, clothed in glory, received the plaudits of the crowd, the approbation of the Press.

Here was the man of action, a new dynamic force, the saviour of a desperate situation. Yet I cannot help feeling that, judged by subsequent events, this same energy, this same force, this same ability to settle, might have been exercised prior to the stoppage, on the first day thereof, in the first week—but those wonderful characteristics of the negotiator did not come to light. That vivid personality gave no sign of its existence.

My own opinion is that greater statesmanship, greater force of character, would have been displayed in fixing the settlement before the crisis than proclaiming one ten days afterwards.

For this action of mine in fighting for a settlement in the mining dispute I was dubbed a rebel, although the subsequent three years of peace in South Wales entirely justified the course that I took.

If to fight against stupidity, to battle against reaction, to resent ill-treatment, to establish more humane conditions of living is to be a rebel, then certainly I am one, and I never shrank from the name.

In those days I fought my own men hard when I thought they were in the wrong, and I admit I fought the employers equally hard. My experience justifies the conclusion that if one is prepared at any time to resist the action of the men when they are obviously in the wrong, and fight hard for them when they are in the right,

they will in the long run give one greater loyalty and support than if one heedlessly presses their claims whether right or wrong.

The Welsh miner is a queer complex. He is temperamental ; he is mercurial. He is either on the mountain-peak of ecstasy or down in the slough of despond. He is quick to run into a fight, but much quicker than his comrades in the other coalfields to get out of it.

His character has been much misunderstood. Being an Englishman brought up in Wales, I was enabled to study him a little more dispassionately than if I had been a thoroughbred Celt.

He is not the beer-swilling, whippet-racing, cock-fighting, wife-beating fellow such as the descriptions of him indicate from time to time when he is engaged in industrial strife.

On the contrary, he is a careful, clean-living, honest-dealing, family-loving man who, though he thoroughly enjoys his sport, in the main keeps strictly to the path of social and individual rectitude.

The Welsh miner's great family ambition is to bring up his children on a much more highly educated plane than he himself was brought up. Fathers will work hard, making the greatest sacrifices ; mothers will pinch and save to give their children the chance to attend the secondary school. This is characteristic of the Welshman wherever he is to be found.

I found the same spirit among the Welsh miners in America when I visited the Pennsylvanian coalfields in the year 1923. I had always felt it to be a great tragedy—a feeling

which has been intensified a thousand-fold since—that many of the fine ambitions of the Welsh miner and his wife were dashed to the ground ofttimes by insecurity of employment, strikes and lock-outs, which made inroads into the family savings and caused them, to their life-long regret, to turn their children's faces towards the mine instead of towards the higher spheres of education.

Nevertheless, the percentage of miners' children who go to secondary schools, compares favourably with the percentage in any other industry.

The young men are not the plotting, scheming band of underground revolutionaries which they are often made out to be. They are great readers, keen debaters, good students; easily roused into rebellion against misery and poverty, quick to resent injustice, ready at any moment to fling themselves into a movement which has for its object the improvement of the lot of their kind.

If they have a fault it is the fault of impetuosity. And they have this in a marked degree.

When in this mood they do not readily respond to the advice of their leaders, but are ready to acknowledge, if the movement goes wrong, that their leaders were in the right.

These, then, were the men I was called upon to represent and to lead.

It was a great and wonderful experience, for not only did one have to assume the responsibility of leadership in actual fighting, but there was the other enriching experience of having to negotiate settlements of disputes which had arisen in other districts, disputes which were



Photo: Topical Press Agency.

AT EASTON LODGE, LABOUR'S "CHEQUERS," WITH THE RT. HON.

ARTHUR HENDERSON AND LADY MERCY GREVILLE.

referred for settlement to a representative of the owners on the one side, and of the workmen on the other, when the local people had failed to agree.

This was the kind of life that I lived until the end of 1918. It was varied and fascinating. In that period I witnessed the coming of what is known as Coal Control, or Government control of the mines.

This followed soon after the strike of 1915. It was the turbulence, the strife, the uncertainty of that period which caused the control to be imposed. It was first started in Wales, and eventually was applied to the whole of the country. The Welsh coal owners had stirred up a hornet's nest.

My contact with the coal owners, both individually and collectively, made me learn that there were two sides to a question. I was always willing and ready to examine the point of view of the other side. No man could possibly go through the detailed work of a miners' agent without developing that faculty for the weighing of evidence, for the sifting of facts necessary for the forming of sound judgment.

CHAPTER X

BIG GAME

IN the year 1918 another event happened which threw me into a still wider sphere of influence and action than ever before.

The Secretary of the Miners' Federation of

Great Britain, the Right Hon. Thomas Ashton, who was the first and only secretary the Federation had ever had in its history up to that year, resigned.

His was a part-time office, but he had filled it with the greatest possible distinction. He was in advancing years, and desired to confine himself strictly to the work of the miners of his beloved Lancashire.

Of all the men I have ever met, I have never met one finer in temperament, nobler in character than the Right Hon. Thomas Ashton. He was gentle and yet firm. His demeanour was placid, but his will was strong and over-mastering.

Upon his resignation it was decided that the office should become a permanent one, and that henceforth the secretary should be a full-time official, devoting his entire energies to the work ; that the office should be in London ; and that the man who was to be appointed should be appointed by a ballot of all the members—800,000 of them—of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

The office to be filled was that of the Secretary of the biggest Trade Union organisation in the world. Tried and experienced leaders of the miners of their respective districts would apply for the post, all of whom were capable of filling it to the greatest advantage of the miners and to the greatest credit of themselves.

Should I apply—less experienced, the youngest miners' leader in the country, only six years before working on the coal-face—or should I leave the post to my more mature and elderly

colleagues and wait for the passage of years for the opportunity to return?

I again consulted my wife, whose advice I had invariably relied upon when taking decisions of great moment. Hitherto that advice had always been of the soundest character. Subsequent experiences have proved her to be right. The decision was in the affirmative. I would apply.

Would the experience of the ballot for my post as miners' agent be repeated? I did not know. It was indeed a great adventure.

First, there was to be a ballot in the South Wales district as to who should be the candidate submitted to the national ballot. In this ballot were young men and elderly men, some who, like myself, had been to Ruskin College, and others whose sole college had been the pit.

The ballot took place in Wales. I was again on top, and my name went forward with the benedictions and blessings of the whole of the miners of South Wales.

There were many candidates, Scottish and English. On this occasion there was no travelling round the country to make the acquaintance more intimately of the workmen; no literature to be circulated. One had simply to stand on one's merits such as they were known through one's active work in Wales and in national conference, where other men had been met, and who, accordingly, formed judgments on those merits.

In the course of time the ballot was completed. The votes were counted in far off Southport, and again I received a telegram that I had topped

the poll—that I was now the first permanent Secretary of that great organisation, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

This was in December, 1918. I was then thirty-one years of age.

It was, undoubtedly, the greatest day in my life. I was now to leave my beloved district of the Garw Valley of Glamorgan and my comrades and colleagues of Wales to come to London, to live in London, to build up the central offices of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain in London from the small humble office of my predecessor, Mr. Ashton, in the parlour of his cottage in Manchester.

I entered into this bigger and newer world with the greatest sense of humility, knowing full well the stupendous task upon which I would be engaged, and yet not knowing whether I should be able to undertake it to the advantage of that vast army of men who had reposed their confidence in me.

It is a strange sensation, and I have felt it on each occasion when I have entered into a newer sphere of work. Would I be able to accomplish it with credit to those whose trust and welfare had been committed to my keeping?

I now arrived at the threshold of the big world of affairs, but not without misgivings.

In June of 1919 we came to London for good. We cherish the recollections of the days of our parting. I was surrounded by evidences of the goodwill of my fellow men. Tokens of comradeship and kindness were heaped upon us, not only by my own men, but by the many scores

of friends, both among the colliery staffs and private citizens of my neighbourhood.

All was so different in London. In the provinces one is always on speaking terms with one's neighbours. One can say "Good-morning" to the milkman, to the dustman, to the baker, to a thousand and one acquaintances in the streets, and call them by their Christian names. But in London this is unknown, unheard of.

I arrived at a moment when the affairs of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain absorbed my whole attention. It was at that stage in 1919, when the whole Trade Union world was clamant for improvement in wages, hours of employment, and conditions of labour.

It was the post-war reaction which every one saw was forthcoming as soon as hostilities ceased.

Men had been told to be audacious in their claims, and audacity was not lacking. The miners claimed advances in wages, reduction in hours, and nothing less than the nationalisation of the mining industry. It was nothing more nor less than an explosion, shattering those crusts of self-repression and Trade Union acquiescence which had accumulated during the last three years of the war.

The very first conference that I attended in the capacity of Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was characterised by a resolution demanding these three things. In the event of their not being granted by the Government a strike was to be declared.

Due preparations were made for that strike ; everything was in trim for the most smashing blow that had ever been delivered at the system which had governed the coal industry from its inception.

The Government was duly impressed by the seriousness of the decision. Attempts were made to stave off the strike. Again I was flung into contact with the then Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, whose acquaintance I had made earlier in another industrial conflict.

After much discussion with the Government, the famous Royal Commission was proposed, since popularly known as the Sankey Commission.

This involved legislation. An Act of Parliament had to be passed. Would we abandon our decision to strike if the Royal Commission was appointed to inquire fully into our claims and into the whole circumstances connected with the industry ?

A great tussle took place, first with the Government and then with our own conference. Having heard the statements made by the Prime Minister, and accepted them in all good faith, the President of the Miners' Federation and I threw in the whole weight of our argument and our influence to get the men and delegates to accept the Royal Commission. Hours, days, were spent in this tussle, and in the end we won.

The Commission was inaugurated, the strike was avoided, and I was then called upon to take my place in the fullest glare of publicity that

has ever been given to proceedings of any Royal Commission.

My experiences on this Commission I now propose to relate.

CHAPTER XI

A ROMANCE OF THE ROBING ROOM

IN keeping with the vastness of the issues involved, and in consequence of the enormous interest evinced by the general public, it was decided that the Coal Commission should hold its sittings in no less a place than the King's Robing Room in the House of Lords.

The Commission began its work in stately surroundings ; in the room in which kings and queens had robed prior to the opening of Parliament for many generations ; where the feet of many nobles and Court dignitaries had trod at royal functions ; surrounded by pictures of surpassing beauty, representing scenes from The Round Table, and such of those virtues which common humanity are exhorted to attain.

In the chair was Mr. Justice Sankey, one of the most eminent of our High Court judges—a tall, broad-shouldered, extremely intellectual, judicial, dignified servant of the Crown. I remembered him from earlier days, when he was a practising barrister attending another court of inquiry into the cause of the great Sengenydd colliery disaster. He then represented the coal owners, whose interests he was

defending. He was a genial, tremendously pains-taking man, with great breadth of vision and a personality which caught men up to him by its very breadth and large sympathies. No one could have been more eminently fitted for this great task. He fitted in completely with his surroundings, and created that quality of impressiveness which the subject for discussion demanded.

During the whole of those sittings, though oft-times he had great cause to be impatient, one never detected even the suspicion of impatience or irritation, either when the most trying witnesses were being examined, or even when the Commissioners themselves asked what must have been the most trying questions. He possessed a native dignity, a nobility of demeanour which it is not the good fortune of the average man to inherit from his ancestors or to acquire by studied self-discipline.

His courtesy reached the very climax of perfection when the wives of pitmen came straight from their colliery homes, some of whom had never been out of their villages before, and stepped into the witness box. He never joked at the expense of the poor. His disposition disarmed fear. Halting, faltering, hesitant witnesses were put immediately at their ease. It was a never to be forgotten experience to hear a miner's wife speaking calmly, simply, and portraying the common burden of her sisters in the mining world in a king's hall, encouraged by the sympathetic tones of a king's judge to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.

The Coal Commission made Mr. Justice Sankey the most beloved and at the same time the most hated of men. He was beloved of the working classes, among whom his name became a household word. He was respected by the educated classes for his absolute fairness, his complete impartiality, but hated by many because of the decisions and judgment at which he eventually arrived.

He will always stand high in the estimation of the miners and the miners' wives. The children of the miners will cherish the most kindly sentiments and thoughts of him. He was the President.

Under him were twelve other men. Three of them were coal owners ; three were representatives of the great industries of the country. These ranged themselves on his right hand. Three others were miners' leaders, and the other three were men who had attained great standing in the intellectual world of Labour.

This was the team that had to be managed, or, rather, these were the two teams that had to be controlled, for by training, by instinct, and by interest, these twelve men immediately formed themselves into two groups. Each man naturally, by temperament and training, viewed the subject for discussion in a special and individual way. No two were alike, no two asked quite the same questions ; and I have no doubt but that each man arrived at a separate conclusion. But, broadly speaking, the interests of each separate group tended towards uniformity, and thus in the main the struggle

was waged from two distinct group-points of view.

It would be no easy task to write a detailed description of the characteristics of each man. At this stage it would not be profitable to attempt it. The characters are all well known, and are contemporary.

The sittings of the court were thrown open to the general public. The accommodation for visitors was limited; only the very early comers and privileged ticket holders could get in. The representatives of the Press of the world were in attendance. Highly-placed members of the legal world waited upon their respective sides. Never were preparations so complete as were the preparations for publicity of the proceedings of this remarkable Commission.

Groups of members of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons trooped in from time to time to watch the proceedings. Each day was a day of dramatic surprise. The court had extraordinary powers for commanding evidence; no trade secrets were too subtle or too well kept to escape the far-reaching hand of the President and his Commissioners.

Colliery owners, landowners, ship owners, coal distributors, general managers of railways, Government officials, mining officials, miners, doctors, scientists, University professors, miners' wives—all took their turn in the witness box. Dukes, lords and laymen were called upon to give an account of their stewardship, to contribute what they knew to the common pool of knowledge. Dusty documents were turned up;

archives containing historical matter relating to the industry were ransacked for the purpose of getting at the truth.

There never was such a Commission before. There never will be one quite like it again. It was one which captured the imagination, which startled the public into a vital interest in the weaknesses and the strength of this great national industry. Masses of documents were prepared, piles of statistics were submitted, thousands of questions were asked, until the whole character of the industry was laid absolutely bare to the public gaze.

It was a great testing time for us all. It was a period of intense intellectual activity. I was at last learning what real, hard mental work was like. It was a wonderful display of intellectual swordsmanship—cut, thrust, and parry, day after day, week after week, each man intent upon doing the best for his side or to vindicate his point of view.

I had never witnessed such a display before. We entered the arena with the greatest sense of modesty and humility. Most of the men were veterans in industry, skilled in the art of debate, competent in cross-examination. But we passed through the experience in comparative calm, egged on by the tremendous issues at stake, sustained and buoyed up by the certain knowledge that a million of our people were closely watching us, sympathising with us, encouraging us, and, in many cases, praying for us.

As the days went by, the temperament, the individuality of the Commissioners became more

and more marked. Each man settled down to pursue his own particular line, and this became tacitly understood to be his line with the rest of the men. Each man had his opposite number. The mathematician was met by the mathematician ; the practical miner by the practical colliery official ; the humanist by the benevolent employer ; the technician by the engineer, and so on.

We exercised ourselves by taking endless walks up and down the Royal Gallery leading from the Robing Room to the House of Lords, along which kings and queens move with their retinues in all the regalia of sovereignty as they proceed to their coronations, or to display the symbol of the relations between the Crown and the people through the medium of the Parliaments. There the Commissioners could exchange views, could debate the statements of the myriad witnesses, could turn over in their minds the kinds of recommendations they were gradually forming and crystallising ready for the report stage.

Up and down, up and down, for half an hour at a stretch—thus we maintained our bodily vigour and our mental alertness. By the courtesy of the Lord Great Chamberlain we took our meals in the dining-room of the House of Lords, where, despite the seeming antagonism of the public court, the fierceness of attack, we would sit down to take our meals in an atmosphere of real friendliness. There was much banter, leg-pulling, joke-cracking, which revealed that the otherwise stern, unrelenting antagonists

of the Robing Room were very human at the dining-table.

It was here that Mr. Justice Sankey always excelled himself. Brilliant in conversation, with a charming wit and delicate humour, he kept the company in a state of excellent spirits. Any ill-feeling or temporary irritation which had been created outside vanished under his sunny disposition. By this means alone we were able to remain good friends to the end.

And what an end ! The proceedings had brought to light as never before the tragedy of the miner's life, the daily dangers of his calling, the fine calibre of the men themselves, the poverty of their reward, the wretchedness of their social existence, the poorness of their home lives, their unsanitary dwellings, their confined and narrow outlook, the sheer hopelessness of their lot.

It brought to light the accumulated evils of an industry which had grown up after a century of unco-ordinated management and a half-century of failure to take advantage of the best-known engineering science, the real nature of the claims of people to all the mineral wealth in the earth, the burden these same people imposed upon the industry as a whole. There never had been such a complete exposure of the conditions under which men and women moved and had their existence.

Then came the reports. There were two—the interim report and the final report. The first resulted in a material improvement in the workman's lot. Wages were increased and

hours were reduced. In the second report His Majesty's judge, the President, declared in the clearest possible English, supported by the six gentlemen who represented Labour and who had sat on his left, that the whole system of the production and distribution of coal must be changed—in short, the final report was a report in favour of the public ownership of the mines and minerals of our country, and of an entirely new method for the distribution of coal on a municipal basis, which, it was declared, would result in the production of coal more cheaply because more scientifically, and a reduction in the price of coal to the consumer because of the elimination of waste.

Better housing for the miners was urged, the creation of a great fund for the purpose of stimulating welfare among the workmen in the colliery communities, and, finally, a recommendation that the education which had been acquired by the miners over a long period of years should be taken the very fullest advantage of in the running of the industry as a whole.

In short, the report on the economic side was in favour of the most drastic changes that have ever been recommended by any Royal Commission, whilst on the human side a new recognition was to be given to the humanity of the men, who up till then had only been regarded as mere industrial units.

These reports startled the world. The Government was shaken. The question was asked : Is this the beginning of a new social order ?

I found myself flung into the teeth of public controversy in defence of the decisions that had been arrived at. I rejoiced in those decisions. I believed, and still believe, that they were just. I regard my share in the work as the biggest task I ever attempted, and with the finest results for the men.

Henceforth I was to be engaged in defending these decisions, in directing the miners' forces and the forces of the whole world of Labour and advanced thought, in the direction of realising in fact the tremendous and far-reaching recommendations of this most unique Royal Commission.

A great campaign was inaugurated throughout the country for popular expositions of the findings of the Court. Hundreds of great mass meetings were organised in every city and town of importance. We were compelled to address literally scores of meetings. I was called upon to write innumerable articles for the Press and the magazines. I had done some writing before, but never on this scale. The country was in a fever of excitement. Constant statement and restatement of the miners' case made it comparatively easy for me to write my book on the nationalisation of mines, which was my first big endeavour in the realms of literature.

And then, to the amazement of everybody, the Government of the day, having recovered from its first shock upon receiving the report, declined to put it into operation.

CHAPTER XII

A SAINT PASSES

IT was during the sittings of the Coal Commission that a great bereavement overtook me. My mother died, comparatively young, worn out by the strenuous task of bringing up a large family in a small mining village. We were six brothers, all of whom worked in the same pit at the same time. The toil and moil of rearing such a large family was a perpetual strain upon the energies of our mother. She devoted herself exclusively to the task of bringing up the family in such a manner as would give each boy the greatest opportunity possible in the struggle of life. That those opportunities were limited was no fault of her own. She shared the common lot of the mother of miners, but she certainly succeeded in infusing into her sons a strong desire to resist the tendency to succumb to the local environment.

She was a gentle and devout soul whose all-absorbing interest in life was the welfare of her sons. Sacrifices that were made by her for this end were great, far reaching, and very personal.

She had a natural mother's pride in watching the progress of myself; she read all the newspaper accounts of my doings and kept nearly all the newspaper cuttings which reported my conduct in the big outside world.

It was always a time of rejoicing when I revisited the old home from time to time, when all the family would be gathered together for

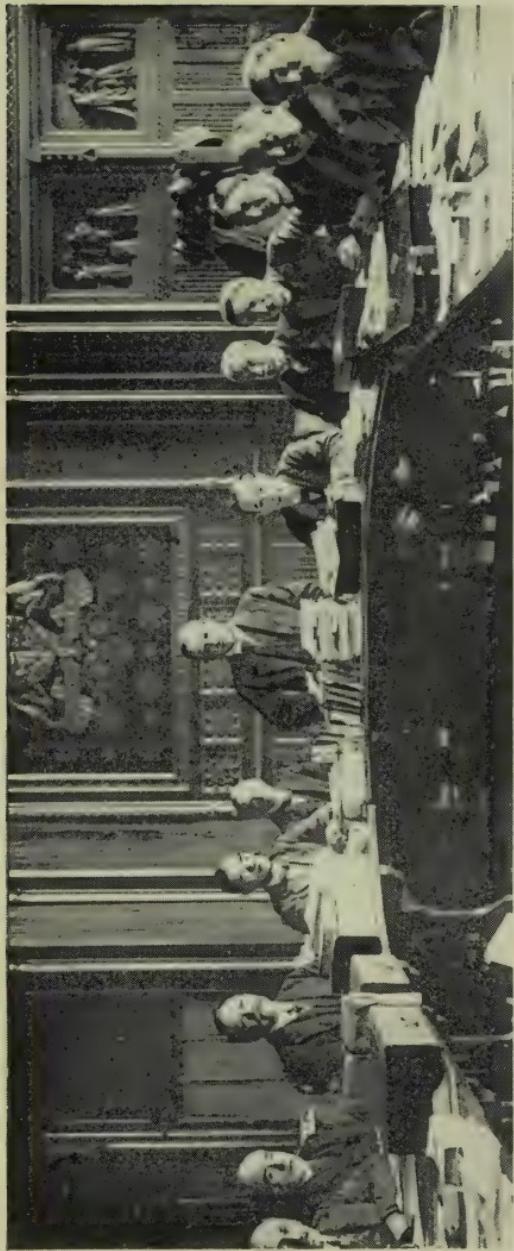


Photo: Daily Mirror.

THE "SANKEY" COMMISSION.

His Lordship in the Chair at the Royal Robing Room, House of Lords.

mutual entertainment and pleasure. Nothing interested and fascinated her more than my doings at the Coal Commission, the reports of which she read with avidity. I saw her but once during the sittings, when I dashed hurriedly away to see her as she lay quietly awaiting the end. She had the greatest faith in my integrity, and understood me better than any one else. The last words that she spoke to me were : "Keep steadfast to the work you are doing." I repeated my vows. It was a great consolation to her.

I shall ever remember with gratitude the deep sympathy of the Chairman and my colleagues on the Commission with me in my loss. It was spontaneous and sincere, and was a great help in those intense days through which we were then passing.

Soon after the closure of the Commission I found myself, in conjunction with my colleagues, constantly meeting, arguing and debating the great issues of the moment with the then Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, and his Cabinet. I remember well my first experiences in going to interview the Prime Minister at No. 10, Downing Street. I was going to meet the great ones of the earth. At the present moment when one enters that wonderful place one does not feel the same sense of humility as on the first occasion ; still, there remains a certain sense of awe upon entering the building in which the great decisions affecting the destiny of our Empire and of the world have been arrived at. I believe that every one who is at all concerned about the

dignity of our Parliamentary institutions or has a real respect for our democratic Constitution feels a certain amount of reverence, mingled with pride, upon entering for the first time the holy of holies. One walks up Downing Street eyed by the onlookers who are always to be found there at all times of the day. Watchful photographers are always carefully waiting for an opportunity to take a "snap" for their respective papers. The bell rings and the door is opened by one of the attendants. One then takes a place in the outer hall, awaiting the summons, by other attendants or secretaries, to proceed inside. At a given signal the delegation or the individual walks into the Cabinet room. We seat ourselves around the Cabinet table and again wait. There is complete order and profound silence everywhere. When all are comfortably placed, the doors are flung open dramatically and in walks the Prime Minister, accompanied by those members of the Cabinet who are immediately interested in the discussion, followed by heads of departments and permanent officials, who are ever ready to supply information, submit facts, and generally help their chiefs in arguing the case.

Of all places in the world where I felt the least nervous in presenting a case it was the Cabinet room at 10, Downing Street. The secret of this is the fact that one has to know one's subject thoroughly before entering. A solid body of well-informed Government opinion sits immediately opposite. The slightest slip or deviation from fact in the presentation of one's case, the

least fallacy or flaw in the argument, exposes one to the quick, rapier-like thrusts of one's opponents, who are vigilant to a degree, ever watching for an opportunity to score in the discussion. Time out of number I have thus sat arguing, fencing, thrusting, parrying, in the support of the case of the men I represented—alive, alert, and wholly concentrated upon the task of fighting for my side.

We did not go there without any concerted plan of action. It was generally arranged between Mr. Robert Smillie, President of the Miners' Association, and myself that I should open the case to which the Prime Minister was expected to reply, criticise, and attempt to tear to pieces, after which Mr. Smillie would take up the weak points in the criticism. He had a great faculty for seeing those weak points, for sensing the fundamental fallacy, and would invariably take the fullest advantage of it in his rejoinders. We made between us a very formidable combination, and oftentimes evoked the commendation of the other side on the way in which we had fought for our side. It was the fact that I believed in my case, and that my convictions were deep and profound about it, that always lent vigour and authority to my declarations. There are many men who argue well when they have a bad case—lawyers, and even some politicians, have this faculty highly developed; but if you hear those same men argue when they are convinced of the justice of their case, their whole attitude and style are transformed. Conviction is the mother of true eloquence.

I can never remember losing my temper on these auspicious occasions. There was considerable tension from time to time, but this was invariably relieved by a little humour, a little common sense, or the recounting of some witty story. In these respects the parties were fairly evenly matched, although if I had to name a man who reaches the very pinnacle of good humour in a crisis, or who can dispel fast-growing and ominous clouds and make visible again the blue sky and the bright sunshine, I would name Mr. Herbert Smith, present President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. His broad Yorkshire dialect and his great fund of humour and native wit always got us out of argumentative mazes and provided a real solution for our hardening irritation. In his younger days he was particularly expert in the treatment of dogs, and this expert knowledge had been brought to the notice of the then Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, who had brought with him from one of his innumerable Continental conferences an Alsatian hound, which one day tripped into the Cabinet room. Mr. Lloyd George thereupon asked Mr. Smith what he thought of this dog. Herbert, or "Our 'Erb," as he is more affectionately named, explained that the dog looked a very fine specimen, but that all dogs grew inside their upper jaw what is known in Yorkshire as a "clumper." Unless this "clumper" were broken, no dog could bite evenly or deeply, and always stood a chance of being defeated in a battle with another dog properly treated. This, he said, in his younger days was done by putting

a red-hot pipe on to the "clumper," and breaking it. The Prime Minister invited Herbert to see if his dog had a "clumper." This he did and discovered that he had one, and pressed it so hard that the dog gave one terrific howl, a big jump and disappeared, much to the alarm of Mrs. Lloyd George and her daughter Megan, who seemed suddenly to lose all confidence in Mr. Smith's veterinary knowledge. The incident caused considerable amusement at the time, and incidentally caused Mr. Smith some loss of reputation.

There are other interesting incidents which came within my observation whilst attending conferences at 10, Downing Street which are worth recalling. During the railway strike, negotiations were proceeding between the Executive Committee of the National Union of Railway Men and the Government. The Trade Union world was very keen to render the maximum assistance possible to the railway men in the settlement of their dispute. They appointed a number of men to act in the *rôle* of peace-makers, and who patiently waited outside the Cabinet room one Sunday morning while negotiations were proceeding inside to lend a hand whenever necessary. The hours dragged by wearily, when, to relieve the tedium, Mr. Jim O'Grady, M.P., now Sir James O'Grady, entertained the company by singing some very choice old Irish songs, in the choruses of which the peace-makers heartily joined. One song led to another. There was a choral song, the leading line of which was "How dry we are." (The remain-

ing lines will be familiar to my readers.) This brought out the hospitable Captain Freddie Guest, who, seeing the point of the song, so disposed himself as to render its continuance thoroughly inappropriate. Then, to the amazement of all, some one started the chorus of *The Red Flag*, which was sung with vigour. I believe that was exactly at the moment at which an agreement was reached inside. It was pure coincidence. The Cabinet room door was flung open, Mr. Lloyd George stepped out, who, seeing Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Ex-Home Secretary, among the number, said: "Will you take your friends upstairs and let them have something to eat?—but be careful not to keep them on the mat." This was a humorous reference to an earlier incident when Mr. Henderson had returned from Russia—where he had acted as the Government's plenipotentiary—and who was all ready to present his report to the Cabinet when neither he nor his report was particularly welcome. He complained of being "kept on the mat outside," an incident which led to his resignation.

I mention these things to let the outside world know that even within the thoroughly prosaic business-like walls of 10, Downing Street, there are occasionally incidents which are common to everyday gatherings of ordinary mortals.

I regard my experiences at Downing Street as being of an exceptionally pleasant character, although I had to do with issues that were of a most far-reaching kind.

In consequence of the resignation of my old

friend, the Right Hon. Thomas Ashton, from the secretaryship of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, he, in the course of time, also resigned his office as Secretary of the International Miners' Federation. Thereupon he was elected the Treasurer of the latter body as a mark of the honour and esteem in which he was held. I then took up the duties of International Secretary where he left off. I was now to enter a sphere of activity which was hitherto unknown to me ; I was to tread the international road, meet representatives of the miners of other nations of the world—men whom I had never met before, the language of many of whom I did not understand, but my life in France and my knowledge of the French language proved an inestimable asset in starting out upon this fresh adventure.

CHAPTER XIII

A GREAT RECONCILIATION

THE first International Miners' Conference after the war was held in the year 1920 in Geneva, at which Conference I was formally confirmed in my position as its International Secretary.

My one ambition in connection with International Trade Union matters was to bring all the original pre-war members of the organisation together once again.

The International Miners' Federation had existed for over thirty years, but the war had shattered it to pieces. The members of this organisation, like those of many others of an international character, had been fighting each other from 1914 to 1918. Undoubtedly the French, Belgian, Italian, and British miners had had many sanguinary engagements with the miners of Germany, Austria and Hungary. The majority of the miners' leaders in each country had ranged themselves on the side of their respective Governments, and it was not to be wondered at in such a circumstance that the organisation languished. Nevertheless, we were attempting to bring into the same conference room, for the purpose of re-establishing the International Trade Union, men who had been furious partisans of their country's cause in the great world war.

The conference had to be held in a neutral country, and Switzerland was chosen. It was not possible in those days to hold a conference, or even the preliminary committee meeting, in any of the countries which had been engaged in war. I was sent forward to make all the necessary arrangements for the conference in advance. I was going to a strange country. I had never been to Switzerland before. Many curious questions were put to me by the authorities at the little frontier town of Bellegarde. My papers were all closely examined, and I noted that they had not given complete satisfaction. After passing through a rather severe cross-examination as to my purposes and intentions in going

to Switzerland, I returned to my place in the waiting train and seated myself comfortably to continue on my journey to Geneva. Just at that moment along came several very officious-looking representatives of the Swiss and French Governments, and I was informed quite politely, but nevertheless very firmly, that I must leave the train with my luggage, and submit myself for further examination to the frontier police before I could proceed further. I made what I am afraid was a very ineffective protest, and descended.

A minute or two later I had the mortification of witnessing my train steaming out of the station, whilst I stood there surrounded by officers in all kinds of uniforms, representing all kinds of specialised interests.

I resorted to protestation and argument, and to what most Englishmen in similar circumstances would have fallen back upon to express their bitterest feelings—several rounds of that language which Englishmen seem to be able to use when they are what is known to be “up against it”! But all to no avail. I was marched off to the local police station, my papers were thoroughly examined, I produced such credentials as I had, and eventually was informed I could travel on to Geneva by a train that left five hours later, not, however, without being informed that a special message had been forwarded to the police at Geneva of the time of my arrival.

I took the precaution of telegraphing to one of the ex-ministers of Geneva to meet me at the

station, which he did, and I was met simultaneously both by my friend and an officer of the law. These two, meeting each other at the same moment, and being well known to each other, saved me from further embarrassment and difficulty. My old friend Monsieur Jean Sigg was my salvation.

The officers of the Swiss Labour movement were helpful to a degree. They realised that their country had been chosen as the ground of reconciliation and restoration of the men associated with the Miners' International, an organisation which had temporarily been put out of action. They left no stone unturned in order to assist me with the preparations for the conference.

They provided me with the best municipal building the city could afford, and they are numerous. They arranged to put printers at my disposal for the printing of our documents in several languages ; they made arrangements for interpreters and translators, and for a local clerical staff that was to assist in the detailed work of the conference.

I spent a day or two with them before leaving to inspect their own public works and their great electricity undertakings on the Rhone. These undertakings are being constructed so as to use the colossal energies of the river itself for the purpose of providing electrical power for industry, electrifying railways, bringing heat and light into the homes of the people, and generally to raise the standard of living of the Swiss nation. A few hurried excursions to the adjacent beauty

spots, and then back to England to complete the arrangements at home.

In August of that year the delegates began to arrive in Geneva to take part in the proceedings which were to herald the re-birth of this great international association, comprising as it did over two and a half million members. Representatives began to come in from America, from Austria, Belgium, France, Holland, Great Britain, Luxembourg, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Italy, Rumania. Many of these I had never met before, and I wondered how they would behave to each other on the first day of the conference. Would they begin by fiercely arguing as to who was responsible for the war? Would there be mutual recrimination? Would there be a general spirit of hostility, sinister and ugly, brooding over the proceedings, or would they have the good sense to leave such discussions as to the origin and conduct of the war to those who were more fitted politically to discuss them? It was my objective to bring them back to discussions on the coal industry, to forget the past, to secure reports and make comparisons as to the changes each country had undergone industrially since 1914. For a little while there were certainly indications of awkwardness and embarrassment and an almost automatic settling down into groups of allies and enemies, but before the conference had proceeded many hours, the icicles were melted, and a better spirit of comradeship prevailed, and at the end the Miners' International was thoroughly reconstructed.

The success of the initial post-war conference quickly spread throughout the Trade Union world, and industry after industry followed suit, and in the course of the year practically every international industrial organisation was revived.

An international conference is the most fascinating assembly imaginable ; all kinds of languages are spoken, although we invariably adopt the rule that only English, French and German are officially translated. English has to be interpreted into French and German ; French into English and German ; German into English and French. Similarly with all documents that are tabled either for information or for discussion. I had to proceed warily. Speaking and writing French moderately well, I soon became firm friends with all the French-speaking delegates, for the leaders of whom I have the profoundest regard and esteem. I have never met a finer body of miners' leaders, for example, than those of Belgium. I could not mix with the German-speaking delegates to the same extent—due to the language difficulty—and yet I could not afford to give them the impression that, as Secretary, I was more intimate with the French-speaking delegates than with the German, for this would have naturally bred the suspicion that I was biassed. I therefore undertook a solemn vow that I would learn the German language sufficiently well to comport myself with the same familiarity with the German-speaking delegates as with the French, and upon this task I am still engaged.

CHAPTER XIV

A PRIVILEGED *VOYAGEUR*

MY work as International Secretary took me to all the coal-producing countries in Europe, and landed me into all kinds of jobs, and sometimes political complications. I have visited in this capacity Italy, Hungary, Austria, Rumania, Germany, Poland, Luxembourg, Holland, Belgium, France, and America. The only miners who are members of the International whose country I have not visited are the miners of Spain. In that rôle I learnt more of international affairs and international personalities in three years than would have been possible for me to have learnt, had I remained in England, in thirty. Travel is the greatest of all educators.

In Italy, before the advent of Mussolini, I studied the Italian Labour movement. It has been my good fortune in Rome to sit up many a night in a little tavern near the Forum discussing, probing, and assimilating problems confronting the Italian working classes. Far up in the Tivoli mountains I have discussed abstruse political and philosophical problems with a group of young English priests who were studying in the English Roman Catholic College in Rome. I have walked along the Appian Way in the moonlight, striving hard to capture the spirit which animated that wonderful highway in the time of Rome's great pomp and splendour. I have walked through the Catacombs of the

early Christian dead with only the dim light of a taper and the assistance of a friendly monk to guide one. I have passed through the clean-cut subterranean passages which, at one time, were both church, shelter and cemetery for the martyrs of the arena.

My travels on behalf of the Miners' International had led me by boat down the blue Danube from Vienna to Budapest, that beautiful Eastern jewel the like of which I had never seen before, the like of which does not exist. On this occasion I was accompanied by an army captain friend of mine. We stepped aboard the river boat, threw our luggage into what appeared to be a passenger's cabin and rushed upstairs to see what could be secured for breakfast. We heard a language spoken unlike anything we had ever heard before. It was Magyar, the tongue of Hungary; but we were badly in need of our breakfast. No one could speak English, no one French ; the only languages the stewards knew were German and Magyar. With infinite pains a steward found me an old French-German dictionary, and between us we made out the items of food required for our breakfast, and, taking advantage of the opportunity, I gave instructions for the preparation of a most extraordinary lunch. The breakfast was not a success. The boat sailed down river, and we resolved with consummate effrontery that the only place for Britishers was on the bridge, but how we were to present ourselves to the captain was our difficulty. But on the bridge we must be. We paced up and down the deck, the captain strolled

up and down the bridge, tall, angular, and with red mutton-chop whiskers flowing out into the breeze. By and by he was joined by a *curé*, and I at once saw a way out of our difficulty, for I concluded that a *curé* must be a man of some learning and would speak either English or French. Boldly stepping on to the bridge, I asked him if he spoke English ; he answered in the negative. I asked him if he spoke French, and he replied, "Certainly, I am a Swiss, and I am going to Budapest." I told him that we were also going to Budapest, and he explained that his mission to that city was to take some of the starving children back from Budapest to Switzerland on behalf of the "Save the Children Fund." I replied that I was going to interview the miners' leaders of Hungary, and, incidentally, that the British miners had contributed £28,000 to the "Save the Children Fund," whose headquarters were in Geneva. I explained, further, that I was the secretary of the British miners' organisation that had done this deed. This seemed to puzzle him for a moment, and he shut out this question : "Are you Mr. Frank Hodges, the Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, from whom we have received this handsome gift ?" and I replied with due modesty "Yes," and there was a scene of real pleasure, even gratitude.

My friend and I were thereupon introduced to the captain, who thawed under this new knowledge. He promptly invited us to join him at lunch. We explained that we had already ordered it by the means suggested above. The

curé was very amused, for he said the captain's invitation had come most opportunely, for we should never have survived the lunch we had ordered through the means of the French-German dictionary. We walked the bridge, lunched with the captain, took coffee in his cabin, and later dined with him. The boat went aground that night soon after the captain had finished his liqueurs. I do not understand the Magyar tongue, but I am sure the oaths that were used by the captain that night would have turned a British master green with envy. He was unable to get the ship afloat till dawn, so we therefore availed ourselves of the cabin into which we had slung our trunks.

At dawn we were confronted by the mate—who, incidentally, had dined with us the night before, who, with the aid of the *curé*, informed us, with all politeness, that we had taken his cabin, but that the matter would be overlooked for a consideration.

The sun shone brilliantly on the Parliament buildings and on the Royal Palace of Budapest as the ship was being moored. There is no sight so wonderful as Budapest from the river at sunrise.

At the time of our arrival in Budapest, the Bolshevik revolution had run its course, and a new *régime* had been instituted. The miners' leaders welcomed our arrival in most glowing terms, and with indescribable enthusiasm, but it was contrary to law to have any public meeting or public demonstration which might in any way be construed as criticising the new *régime*.



A GOOD YARN.
Joseph Dájavn, President Belgian Miners' Federation, at the Folkestone Conference.

It was known as the Horthy *régime*, and it had swung to the other end of the pendulum after squashing the revolution of Bela Kun.

Meetings could be held, but there was to be no expression of opinion unfriendly to the State, and no policy could be discussed other than that related to the friendly society side of Trade Union work.

The question was, how were we to be introduced to the mass meetings of the workmen? It could not be done; the only thing that could be arranged was for me to attend a meeting of the Musicians' Union which was being held on a Sunday morning to talk over some matters of domestic interest. The meeting was in full swing when I arrived, and I stepped inside the door only to be confronted with two armed *gendarmes*, who stood before me with drawn swords. My speech vanished; I nearly followed suit.

At that precise moment the president of the meeting, noting the confusion at the doorway, recognised me from an introduction of the day before. He gave a quick word of command to the members, who sprang to their feet, giving every evidence of careful disciplinary training. They burst into perfectly harmonised song, just as one would hear a male voice party render a song at some Welsh eisteddfod. It was their song of welcome.

The *gendarmes* lowered their swords, but I remained silent. I listened until the song was finished, and then the chairman called for three "Bravos" which shook the building. I was

about to reply, when up came the swords once again. I gave one wave of recognition to the chair, and was then hurried out of that part of the building.

Despite the hazard and a danger, it certainly was real life.

It was my international work as Trade Union leader which brought the greatest variety into my life. I knew by this time nearly every continental Labour leader—both in the industrial and in the political world, as well as others who occupied important positions in their respective countries, but who were not of my Trade Union and political faith.

My last set of experiences which I related were connected particularly with Hungary ; the following relate more especially to Poland.

Under the old dispensation prior to the war, Poland was non-existent as a sovereign and independent State. She was divided into three parts, each of which was ruled by a nation which was quite foreign to the Poles, and which represented to the Polish mind, the oppressors. She was under Russian rule for one part, Austrian rule for the next, and German rule for the remainder. When her independence was proclaimed, she immediately set about creating her own strictly Polish institutions in the place of the other three.

She had, and has, a considerable mining population who were engaged either in coal mining, iron mining, or salt mining. These miners in the past had been principally organised into Trade Unions that were either distinctly

German or Austrian in their character. They now began to organise themselves into distinctly Polish Trade Unions. I was most anxious that this should be done, and endeavoured with all the means at my disposal to assist them in their task.

The result was that the Miners' International Committee eventually held a meeting in Warsaw for the purpose, first of understanding the situation of the miners in that country, and secondly for the purpose of bringing them into the family of the International Miners' Federation.

Our experiences at the frontier were interesting to a degree, and certainly lacked neither in danger nor in humour. We first of all had to pass through the German customs, and then to run the gauntlet of the German frontier police. These police were neither more nor less than the vestiges of the old German Army, and the officers still maintained in that far-off, remote frontier village the same truculence and swagger of pre-war days. We were thoroughly and systematically searched to see what valuables in the shape of British currency we had in our possession.

One of our number, Mr. Stephen Walsh, M.P., seemed to provide them with a special object for a display of courtesy. He was taken into a private room and was subject to a minute and extremely intimate examination, with the result that the party was detained and threatened by a bumptious young German officer with a refusal to cross the frontier and with despatch by the next train back to Berlin.

How piquant the situation becomes when one reflects that in a very short while afterwards my friend Mr. Stephen Walsh was appointed Secretary of State for War of the great British Empire ! I cannot help but think that his mind must travel back even now to the incidents of that night when he was put to great but totally unnecessary inconvenience by this young German subaltern.

I remember his vigorous protests and his infuriation. I stepped forward, and, in my anxiety to explain that our mission was a perfectly legitimate one, touched this sublimated bit of pomp upon the shoulder, whilst inviting him to examine our credentials in detail, all of which I carried in my dispatch-case. He angrily turned round, threw my hand away with his left, and with his right drew his sword from its scabbard and shouted : " How dare you touch a German officer ! "

For a moment I was nonplussed ; I had a vision of being run through by this young gallant, when suddenly I recollect that I had in my possession letters from the leaders of the German miners' movement, who, in addition to their Trade Union work, were prominent members of the German Reichstag. These were also to attend the meeting in Warsaw, and had intimated that they would not arrive at the frontier until the following day. I snatched them out of my bag, and held them up in the face of this young blood and asked him to read. He did, and in consequence his whole attitude changed. He at once became very obliging,

almost to the point of servility. We were there-upon allowed to go back to our train, and we crossed into Polish territory without further obstacle or molestation. What a difference when we found ourselves on the Polish side of the frontier !

Of all the peoples in Europe I have ever met, I have never met a people more polite and courteous than the Poles. At the frontier station we were met by Government officials ; men were placed at our disposal to carry our luggage, to deposit it in waiting sleeping compartments which had been specially placed at our disposal for the journey from the frontier to the capital. A warm supper awaited us ; each man had his own sleeping berth. Without formality our passports were accepted, and we settled down to a night of comfort in our specially provided coach. What a contrast !

CHAPTER XV

IN THE GHETTO

AT Warsaw we were the guests of honour. The Poles desired to create a favourable impression upon us, and they succeeded. The miners' leaders had heralded our coming. We were not only entertained by the leaders of the Polish Labour movement, but were treated with the greatest respect by the political leaders of the nation.

For quite a long time French influences had entirely predominated in Polish Government offices, but it was obvious that all desired to be on friendly terms with Great Britain. We spent much of our time in visiting Government departments, in interviewing and being interviewed by the leaders of Polish thought. We took tea with the ex-President, and we dined with the Ministers of the Republic.

I saw a great deal of the life of the people, especially the peasant people, and personally investigated the conditions of life of the poor of Warsaw. What a difference between our ideas and standard of comfort and well-being to those of that far-off country ! Peasant men and women not only worked in the fields bare legged and bare footed, but they also came to town with their produce in the same condition. Their country homes were poor and squalid. They were accustomed to this, for poverty and misery had been their lot for many generations, yet it was obvious, given a long period of peace, free from the rigours of war and from the devastating march of conflicting armies over their countryside, they could become a rich and prosperous nation.

A supreme point of interest in Warsaw itself, was the Ghetto, the home of the Jews. We visited it : it provided me with the most startling experience. They were the most extraordinary type of Jew I had ever seen ; they looked exactly as though they had stepped out of the Old Testament. The scriptural artists of our day and generation who paint

pictures of the ancient tribes and individuals of the Old Testament Israel must have got their models from the Ghetto of Warsaw: tall, straight men, appearing straighter than they were by the fact that they wore long black soutanes from neck to heel; jet black hair, wide expanse of white brow, made the whiter by the fact of the faces being heavily clothed in long black beards.

They walked about in pairs, seemingly engaged in animated and endless conversation. We penetrated into the heart of the Ghetto where our curiosity was noted. At one point we became surrounded by the long lean figures. There were menacing looks on all sides. Our nationality was demanded. They suspected that we were Austrians; and they hated Austrians. We explained in French that we were British and French, and their attitude softened. We were permitted to retreat, which we did quickly, back into the open air and to safety. These Jews comprise a very large percentage of the Warsaw population.

We were fortunate in being taken to inspect a great salt mine near Cracow by the miners' leaders and by several Government representatives. It was a salt mine which is reputed to have been commenced by the Romans. It belonged to the nation. Although I had been a miner for so many years, it had never been my lot to go into any other mine than a coal mine.

We arrived at the pit-head to be greeted by a brass band, which played us a tune of welcome. The band were all men selected by their fellow-

workers of the salt mine to entertain us whilst we were there.

As this mine had recently come into the possession of the Polish State, the Minister of Education was taking advantage of the fact to give large numbers of children an opportunity of visiting this interesting piece of State property. They were brought, at the Government's expense, from villages and towns within a radius of a couple of hundred miles; they were taken to the mine one day each week, and were not only given an object-lesson in geology, but had their national pride stimulated by a new sense of ownership. This practice, I might add, was adopted by the Minister of Education in many other spheres, with the result that the patriotic spirit grew apace.

When the queues of children had been exhausted we descended the shaft. There were both men and women visitors.

What an extraordinary sight awaited us at the shaft bottom:—one huge, monster cavern, the sides and roof of which were not visible. Here the Romans had begun their work, and had extracted in the course of time hundreds of thousands of tons of salt from this particular place. Away up somewhere in what one judged to be the roof a smaller cavern was illuminated, and in this sat the same brass band that had welcomed us at the surface. At this height the men played another tune of a merry and cheerful character. They had arrived at this point by another route. We passed along one of the main galleries until we arrived at the miners' chapel,

carved out of the solid salt by the hands of the miners in the days gone by. Pillars along the aisles were of salt ; the altar, most artistically worked, was of salt. In here the miners came, on their way to work, for a benediction, from their patron saint, who watched over them and guarded them from danger. On certain days in the year the men and women of the adjoining villages go there to worship, as has been the custom for several centuries past. Yet further into the mine we found the *café* from which the men purchased their mid-day meal, their hot coffee, or their glass of vodka. At this point they were assembled to greet us. There was ample room to accommodate them. We held a meeting there. It sounded strange to hear one's own voice delivering an English speech to a large audience of workmen who spoke another language, and who were assembled deep down in the bowels of the earth. Crystal salt glittered under the electric lights. It looked like fairy land, and for a few moments I wondered whether it was reality or not.

Loud and long "bravos!" greeted our speeches when interpreted, the echoes of which rumbled down the long galleries and came back to us from all kinds of unsuspected quarters. We then went into the actual working face, where the salt was being blasted out in huge chunks with the aid of explosives. It is not the pure white salt one sees on one's breakfast table. It has to go through many processes of refining before it arrives at that stage. They had reached an output of this solid rock salt of about

eight hundred tons per day, which was an invaluable asset in the commercial life of the country. Back again, by another route, towards the pit shaft. The band was playing some dance music in the distance. We hurried forward to find ourselves in an exquisitely finished ballroom, with a polished floor of salt, salt sides and roof. We were informed that the thing to do was to have one dance in this ballroom with the ladies specially provided as partners—daughters of the miners working in the mine ; and then back to the surface.

I could not resist the invitation to dance with my underground partner. It was a waltz—a salt waltz. It was unique and enjoyable, and the fact that we entered into the spirit of the occasion with much zest gave the greatest possible pleasure to that little mining community.

Then to the surface, to be photographed and to be presented with figures worked in salt by some of the men who were actually working in the mine at the time.

My impressions of Poland are favourable to a degree. It has wonderful potentialities. The Poles, in their new-found freedom, may go off at a tangent ; their danger lies in being momentarily too truculent. Happily they are blessed with wise and prudent leaders, and I repeat, given a long measure of peace, they will soon occupy an honoured place in the European family of nations.

The miners and their leaders have oftentimes pressed me to go back and pay them another visit, and this I shall certainly do immediately an opportunity presents itself.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DAY BEFORE

PERHAPS the most sensational part of my life was lived in the year 1921—the year of the great miners' lock-out in this country.

For some months prior to the end of 1920 I had a premonition that a great conflict would arise in the following year. A Trade Union leader who can boast of any experience whatever reads the signs of the times with a fair amount of accuracy. He hears statements made ; he sees movements initiated by employers ; he reads the speeches of prominent individuals at meetings of boards of directors—and he draws his own conclusions.

Colliery proprietors in 1920 were chafing under a restraint and restriction imposed upon them by Government control of the trade. For practically four years they had been subject to departmental regulation. They longed to shake off the fetters of the bureaucrat. They desired to hasten the day when they would be free from what they called the “dead hand of Government control.”

This control would be terminated automatically under an Act of Parliament in August, 1921. In December, 1920, the coal owners considered that this was too long a time to wait. They got busy. Their first task was to influence the Government of the day to take a favourable view

of their attitude, and to this end they set about convincing the responsible Ministers.

The most important man they had to convince at that time was the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Robert Horne—not a difficult task, for he was already convinced of the soundness of the doctrine of “hands off industry” by the Government.

One instinctively felt that he had accepted the owners’ view, and that he was only waiting for the opportunity to give it effect. One never suspected, however—I certainly did not—that his convictions were so profound as to determine that he would take steps to abolish control of the coal trade before the appointed time.

One expected that at the appointed time he would show good reason in the House of Commons why the Act should be discontinued ; that he would strongly resent what would certainly be the miners’ demands for a continuation of control for a longer period if no amicable and workable arrangement had been arrived at between the miners and the employers before the appointed date.

It was part of my plan to anticipate this decision and endeavour to get such an arrangement between the owners and the miners on a purely voluntary basis as would keep the industry going undisturbed, even after the period of control came to an end, on terms as near as possible to those enjoyed during the period of control.

I felt instinctively that if such an agreement were not arrived at the mining industry would

be launched into a period of strife and chaos on a grand scale, the like of which had never been experienced in that industry before.

For months I strove to avoid such a catastrophe, but, alas, such strivings were all in vain. The coal owners succeeded in getting the Government to introduce legislation for the decontrol of the coal trade on March 31st, 1921, five months before the statutory period embodied in legislation at that time.

Many were the interviews that we had with the President of the Board of Trade with a view to turning him from what we considered to be this mad course. Many are the debates I have held with him in an endeavour to show him the wrong that was being perpetrated upon the community and the miners generally by his action.

I cannot believe that he foresaw that the results of his decision would lead inevitably to a prolonged stoppage of work. I still think that, had he contemplated such an eventuality, he might have hesitated. I realised it as clearly as I had ever realised anything in my life. I tried to persuade him to accept my view. I found him to be a genial and pleasant man with whom to argue; I have never seen him ruffled in debate. He was blandness itself, and had a faculty for easily comprehending and retaining in his mind both the most complicated statistical statements and the most involved and complex of difficulties.

But such a partisan was he of the right of private enterprise to operate in a perfectly un-

restricted manner that he was not open to be influenced by the strongest arguments that could be adduced. He displayed such a marked prejudice and bias against control as to make it almost impossible to give that judicial examination of all the relevant facts and considerations that were put forward.

Then came this surprising decision of the Government as a whole to decontrol the industry at the end of March. We went several times to the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, to endeavour to dissuade him from this course and to change the decision of his Cabinet. We told him that the whole industrial life of the country was going to be upset ; explained in detail how the flickering hopes of a revival in trade would be shattered, and how a national industry would receive a blow from which it would take years to recover. We endeavoured to show that throughout the length and breadth of the land there would be chaos of an unprecedented character ; that in the markets of the world we should lose such slight foothold as we had been able to gain after the termination of the war ; that the lynx-eyed Americans would come here and put coal into the European market, which for generations had been exclusively British ; that they would even go to the extent of selling coal in Europe, even at a loss, in order to get established to a small extent among the regular customers of this country.

This pleading fell upon deaf ears, and the devastating consequences indicated above were fully realised. However, I take a great deal of

consolation from the fact that as an individual I did everything that was humanly possible to avert what turned out to be a great industrial tragedy.

A few days before March 31st I fought tenaciously with our own people in full conference for the Executive Committee to be empowered to effect a temporary settlement purely on wages, which would last for a sufficiently long period to enable representatives of the Government, the employers, and the men to view the whole situation in the light of further experience and in an atmosphere of greater tranquillity, when the bitterness engendered consequent upon the Government's decision to decontrol prematurely had somewhat died down —this in order to gain time for the purpose of hammering out a more permanent contract of agreement between employers and workmen. But feeling ran too high. Passions engendered were too strong for that cold, judicious treatment of the situation which the circumstances demanded.

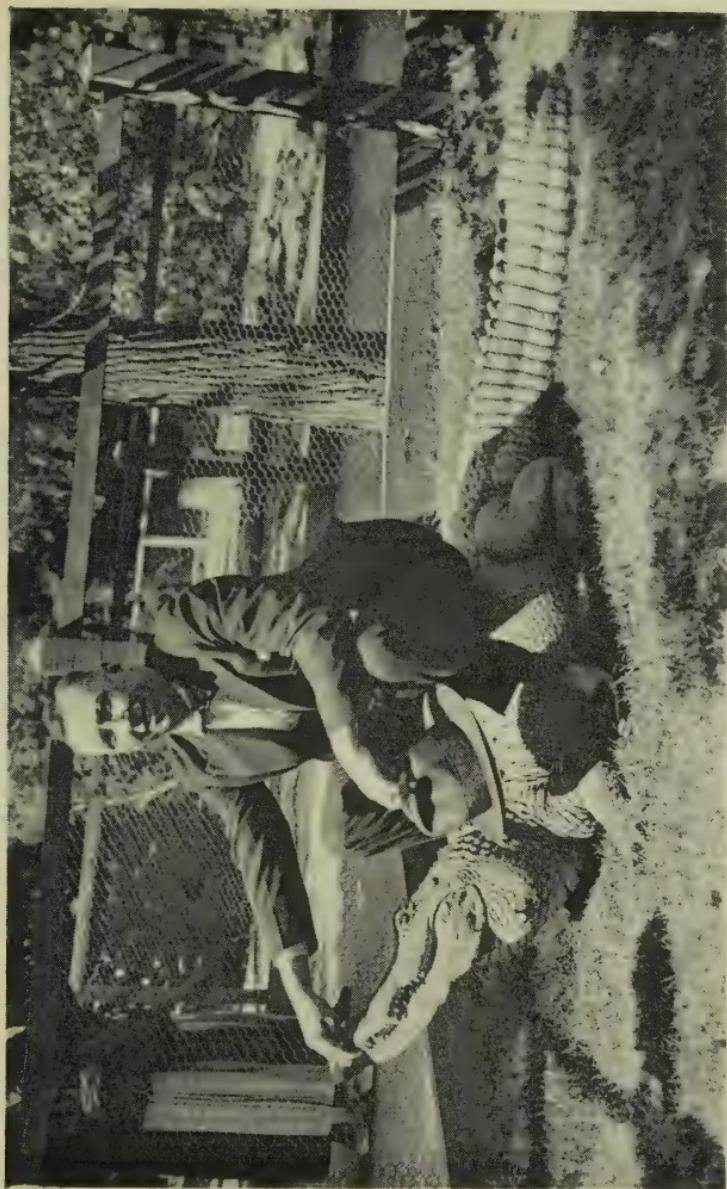
The fatal April 1st arrived. The day was appropriate. Every miner in the country, every so-called "safety-man," every surface worker, had received notice from his employers to terminate his contract of employment by that date. Nothing of the kind had ever happened before. There had been lock-outs in certain collieries or districts involving small and large numbers of men, but never before had there been anything in the nature of a national lock-out.

In point of fact there had been only one national strike before in the history of the coal trade, and that was in 1912. The new lock-out involved all the workmen, including those whose business it was to look after the safety of the mines, to keep down water, to prevent mines from flooding ; ostlers whose duty it was to feed horses, enginemen whose duty it was to wind men up and down the shafts—all these were dismissed on that never-to-be-forgotten April 1st.

Immediately this happened the coal owners and the Government realised their mistake. They began to ask for the “safety-men” at least to be kept on. They spoke of the wholesale disaster to their property ; they worked up public feeling in favour of the poor pit ponies. The owners impressed upon the Government the need of sending naval ratings to man the pumps. But it was too late, for the miners had decided that the notices should take their course.

There was something deadly logical in their attitude. They were not responsible, and they accepted no responsibility. I was ready even then to protect the industry from the consequences of the owners’ own rash act ; and, indeed, in spite of the notices, fought for the “safety men” to continue at their work, even though the rest continued to be locked out, provided the pre-lock-out wages were maintained for these men while the struggle lasted and until a new agreement had been entered into.

Again tempers were on edge, and sound judgment took wings and disappeared. From now



OUR AMERICAN GUIDE.

The Hon. David Fowler, Member of the Pennsylvania State Legislature.

on the fight was to be waged in the deadliest fashion. It was to be a pitiless battle, no quarter being asked for, and none given.

How the struggle was conducted, the stages through which it passed, the magnificent spirit of the men, and never-to-be-forgotten scenes in the House of Commons on April 15th, the episode known as "Black Friday," the consequent further continuation of the struggle, until a settlement was arrived at after the end of the thirteenth week, I shall now proceed to describe.

From April 1st, 1921, to July 13th of the same year, the great lock-out went its way.

The first six weeks was a period of the intensest excitement. The question on everybody's lips was : Will the Triple Alliance function ? It was due to come into operation in the first two weeks of the lock-out, and everybody awaited the greatest dramatic moment in the history of Britain's industrial movement with bated breath.

For years the machine had been a-building. For such a moment as this the trade unionists had waited and watched. Three great organisations, miners, railwaymen and transport workers, were to enter into a common struggle to protect the interests of a single trade, because a great principle was at stake which affected the well-being of all three, and—so runs the constitution—was national in character.

One—the miners—had been attacked on a national basis. Time for action had come. It was the business of this "Triple Alliance," in such a circumstance, to take action on a given day. Nearly two million workmen would be

involved as direct participants in this great struggle ; millions of others would be indirectly involved whose work depended upon the normal continuance of the rest. The theory was that such a formidable combination would shatter all opposition, that such an array of force would cause the enemy to abandon the struggle without joining issue ; that the prospect of complete industrial paralysis would shake the Government out of its lethargy, and that justice would be done to the men through a concession of their claims.

Of this mighty combination I was the Secretary. As my own union was the one primarily affected, it was mutually arranged that the Secretary of the Transport Workers' Federation, Mr. Robert Williams, should take over the secretarial duties of the Alliance during the crisis, thus leaving me free to conduct the miners' case both before the Government, the employers, and in the press.

The days were taken up in conferences, meeting the press representatives, writing and dictating ; nights were fully occupied in planning, in considerations of tactics and industrial strategy. One or two hours' sleep was all that one could afford to snatch.

When every other plan had failed, one's mind turned inevitably to the insistent question : Would the Triple Alliance act ?

Joint meetings were held nearly every day. The "Big Six" were in constant consultation. These were the President and Secretary of each organisation respectively, save in the case of the

N.U.R., of whom Messrs. J. H. Thomas and C. T. Cramp were the representatives. Always willing and watching for an opening for a renewal of negotiations with the Government or the employers, I nevertheless endeavoured day by day to get the leaders of the other two unions to face the fact that there would be no settlement until the Triple Alliance announced to the world its intention to act—and with resolution.

There was hesitation ; there was delay. The decision of the miners to refuse to make special terms for the re-engagement of the " safety men " led to newer complications ; to procrastinations. We were informed that we had made a mistake in tactics ; that we had alienated public sympathy ; that this mistake would have to be rectified before sympathetic action could be considered.

As explained earlier, this was my view from the start, which, had it been accepted, would have avoided many days' delay, much talk, and endless varieties of excuses for inaction. Upon reflection, however, it was but natural to expect that it would take some time to get such a huge ship safely off the slips and properly launched. In fact, the launching was not to be—not yet. The conviction began to grow upon me that it would never be launched. I waited and watched. I knew there was no escaping the simply-worded yet effective constitution of the Alliance if the Will to operate it but existed. But without the Will the machine was as useless as an aeroplane without petrol.

As a result of a change of attitude of the

miners in respect of their "safety men" in response to the call of the other members of the Alliance, negotiations were reopened with the Government and the employers. This had the effect of creating a much longer period of delay, and consequent thereon a new crop of excuses and hesitations.

The miners were asking for the restoration of the *status quo* of the pre-lock-out period, or alternatively the embodiment of the principles in a voluntary agreement which during "control" were enforced by statute.

It seemed superficially a simple request, but it involved fundamental changes in the character of the relations between men and masters.

The Government were not likely to consent readily. The owners were adamant, but the thing that concerned me most was: Would the Triple Alliance ever act to save the miners from defeat? I knew the negotiations would be abortive, and that the testing day had only been temporarily postponed.

What curious experiences I had during those never-to-be-forgotten days! Shoals of letters were received from all kinds of people from all parts of the world. There were those who claimed relationship, and those who for ever disowned me. There were those who had a word of sympathy and commendation, and those who criticised and abused.

Those which amused me most were the ones which threatened me with violent death. I had a regular correspondent who had the whimsical idea of sending me a letter twice a week, upon

the first page of which he drew a coffin, with the fraternal remarks that within six days from the receipt thereof I should rest therein killed by his own hand on the evening of the third day following the delivery of the letter. I was several times threatened by a stiletto death, and was occasionally warned not to drink tea in a certain restaurant off Russell Square.

One night as I was stepping into a taxi outside Unity House a voice hissed in my ear, "By God! if this was not England, I'd kill you where you are, right here."

I thought I would like to have a look at the face of this meticulous would-be murderer whose manners were so ineffable, but a short struggle saw him slip away in the darkness.

Although I always discussed the situation with my wife at the end of each day upon my arrival home, there were confidences which I thought wise to withhold.

Again, how fertile is the human mind in such moments of crisis. Every post brought forth a number of letters with schemes for the speedy termination of the struggle. No crisis ever arises in this country—and I suppose it is the same elsewhere—unless some bright genius has plans for its solution far more ingenious and brilliant than those conceived by the men who are actually engaged in the fight itself. Whilst one always eliminated about 98 per cent. of such schemes as the product of deranged minds, the rest were charged with a fine healthy spirit brimming over with a splendid patriotism and a profound desire to help.

Then there is the obsequious friend of both parties whose great and disinterested desire is to bring the parties together—the fellow who claims to be in the confidence of both sides. One has to distinguish between the interloper, the spy, and the genuine lover of peace. All this takes time and judgment, but one learns by experience and acts accordingly. This is the common lot of all Trade Union leaders in time of battle, and this country is singularly fortunate in having a large number of men elected to these high and responsible posts whose judgment in matters of moment is unrivalled, and whose integrity in the day of trial is beyond reproach.

During this early period, I made it a practice, whenever assailed by critics from within or by foes from without, when feeling momentarily depressed by the numerous delays and hesitations, when the horizon was as black as pessimistic comrades could make it, to go away from London altogether for a few days. Then I would go down to some colliery village to meet with and mix among the men. This provided me with the greatest tonic for jagged nerves. . . . The men's sunny temperament dispelled all gloom.

These were the men who with their families did all the fighting and endured all the misery. For them the future was full of uncertainty, of poverty, of debt. Yet they fought with an infectious cheeriness. They had confidence in me. They knew nothing of the inward struggle of London. They were the wells at which I drank deep draughts of inspiration. They were

bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. For them no paralysing despair, they were the gay warriors of industry. I would address them, take them into my confidence, hear their views, and then I would return to headquarters refreshed and ready for any amount of work which would come my way.

No finer race of men ever breathed, and none have been, or are a bonnier race of fighters, than the toilers of the mine. It was with these men in my mind, with a poignant recollection of their cheerful suffering, that I accepted on the celebrated April 14th the invitation from Members of Parliament to address them fully upon the situation. A meeting full of fate for the whole nation, and which preceded and led up to the events of the next day—"Black Friday."

CHAPTER XVII

"BLACK FRIDAY"

THURSDAY night, April 14th, 1921, was almost as full of interest both to the world and to myself as was indeed the 15th—"Black Friday." The events of the one did not cause the other, although they were so interwoven as to appear so.

The President and Treasurer of the Miners' Federation and I had gone down to the House of Commons on the afternoon of that memorable Thursday, to meet some of the members of the

Parliamentary Labour Party and other members of the Triple Alliance. The purpose of this was to still further explain the principles underlying that special part of the miners' claim for what had by then come to be known as the national "pool." This daily repetition of explanation of the "pool" to members of the Alliance alarmed me. If a general had to give a daily explanation to his soldiers of the causes for which they ought to go into action, he would have grave cause for doubt as to whether they were fit to go into action at all.

But such was the fact. The explanations of that day revealed a belief, nay, a conviction, that the main feature of the miners' claim for a national wages and profits "pool" in the mining industry was political rather than industrial. The railwaymen said that they had no "pool" in their industry, and so did the transport workers. A claim for an advance in wages, or a fight to resist a reduction, was a simple matter, and they were wholehearted with us in the latter, but alas! the "pool" was a mystery. This attitude, whilst understandable, caused me much misgiving.

This meeting was over about six o'clock. Just as it concluded, several Members of Parliament came to me with the interesting information that the Chairman of the Coalowners' Association had been invited by a large body of the then Government's supporters to state to them in detail the coalowners' case. Knowing the officials of the miners were in the House at another meeting, a deputation was coming to

me to ask me to meet the Members of the House to state to them in detail the miners' case. This piece of information was conveyed to me by a miners' Member of Parliament. I conveyed it to my colleagues. We decided that we would accept the invitation for that very evening. The deputation came later. They explained that the Coalowners' Chairman's statement had led to much confusion and dissatisfaction, in short, that he had not completely made out a case. They would like to hear the miners' side and ask questions on many points that the Coalowners' Chairman had raised. Consent was readily given. We dined quietly in the Strangers' dining-room, and awaited the time of the meeting.

A most important departure from Parliamentary tradition was about to take place. The evening was charged with intense interest. Never before had Members, whose Government and Cabinet had considered the whole dispute, and pronounced judgment upon it, taken such an initiative as to request to meet the parties themselves, to get an understanding of the case from the disputants themselves, and form their own conclusions. It was a remarkable step for Coalition Members to take. It was regarded as a reassertion of the rights and responsibilities of the Private Member.

We went upstairs to the Grand Committee Room. The place was packed to suffocation. The chamber was empty. Ordinary House of Commons business had come to a standstill. In the presence of my colleagues I was called upon

to address the Members. This I did. I remember the care with which I delivered my speech. I never forgot for a moment that there were men there who had not the slightest idea of the merits of the case. I went into the dispute in the greatest detail, and felt at the end that I had made a real contribution to an understanding of the miners' claim. As I unfolded my facts and urged my arguments, I intently observed the faces and expressions of my audience.

There were those who would set a trap for the unwary. They were few. There were those who genuinely desired a settlement of the dispute, and who were anxious to help in that direction. They were many. My secret hope was that they would take a different view of the case from that of the Coalition Cabinet, and that they would bring a new form of pressure upon the Prime Minister. I did not expect much. The subservience of the Private Member to the Party Machine is proverbial.

Then came questions. There had been a few interruptions during my speech, but nothing to indicate general hostility. But at question-time scores of Members jumped to their feet at the same time. The scene was an historical one. Here was I, a non-Member of Parliament, standing up before this huge gathering of politicians in their own House, thrusting and parrying, explaining and answering, the scores of questions which were fired off at me. It was the consciousness that I was representing the vital interests of over a million men that enabled me to go through such an ordeal with comparative ease.

But would these men act? Would they do any good. Were they sufficiently moved to exercise pressure upon the Government. This I saw plainly, that on the miners' wages proper they were in the mood to exercise such pressure as they had to prevent the big cuts proposed by the owners and supported by the Cabinet. They had doubts about the "pool," and they so expressed themselves. The "pool" to them was political. Wages they agreed was industrial. Then came the vital question : "If we can get you a satisfactory wages settlement, will you agree to temporarily abandon your "pool"? Here was a question for decision. If I had said "No," their assumption about the "pool" would have been confirmed. If I said "Yes," it would have been entirely on my own responsibility, and contrary to the decision of the Miners' Executive. In a moment my mind was made up, and in the presence of my two colleagues, and without audible opposition from them, said : "Whilst I cannot see at the moment how a satisfactory wages settlement can be arrived at in the absence of the national pool, if you can induce your Government to propose such a settlement as you suggest, I have no doubt whatsoever that such a proposition will be favourably considered by my Executive Committee." It was this answer, and this answer alone, which was responsible for such action as the Members took, and which I shall describe in a moment. It was the correct answer. I have never regretted giving it. There are moments in men's lives when great events hang in the

balance and quick decisions have to be taken. This was one of them. At such a moment the mind becomes extraordinarily clear and, despite the quickness of the judgment, the mind sees the whole results thereof in a startlingly clear perspective. This is what I saw. I saw the Government acting upon this decision. Sending for my Executive next day, most probably making an offer for settlement on a wages basis pure and simple, with a reference of the "pool" question to a committee of experts for examination and report. I had a vision of a stern struggle with my committee to induce them to accept the invitation to go to discuss the proposal. The struggle would be accompanied by much bitterness, but they would go. If the Government's wage offer were found to be unsatisfactory, then we would go back to the members of the railway and transport workers unions, *i.e.*, the other two parts of the Triple Alliance, and say: "You have always been hesitant about the 'pool.' You have never fully agreed to fight with us for such a principle as is unknown in your industries. You have said you understand the proposals for cutting down our wages to the bone; very well, then, the issue is now one of wages pure and simple; this is all the Government offers; you see it is inadequate. Now will you fight with us?" Nothing will ever shake my belief that in such a circumstance the answer would have been a unanimous "Yes." The great Triple Alliance would, like a great industrial battleship, have taken up its position and moved into action. But

"the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley."

What excitement ! The meeting of the Members of Parliament selected a deputation to go over to 10, Downing Street, whilst my colleagues and myself wended our way home and to bed. Ten Downing Street, however, was the scene of much activity. The Prime Minister was in bed. He must come down. Why should Lloyd George sleep when such great things were afoot. Was this to be another case of Nero fiddling whilst Rome was a-burning ? No ! No ! Down he must come. He came—in his pyjamas. He has described the scene to me since. Three or four people speaking all at once. Not one telling the same tale as his neighbour. No one able to give a coherent account of what had actually transpired. Something had happened at the House of Commons. Frank Hodges had spoken, had made an offer of new negotiations. Must write a letter, quick ! Invite Miners' Committee to Downing Street first thing in the morning. "What has he offered ?" queried the P.M. "We don't know quite; but invite the Committee." After repeated efforts to get the facts he gave it up and sent them away and returned to bed. He was up early, and, even before he was dressed, wrote me a letter asking if I could verify certain statements made to him overnight by Members of Parliament, which he set down in his note, and, if so, would the Miners' Committee come down to see him at once. The morning papers, which had no means of accurately recording the facts, gave varying accounts

of what had happened, all incorrect. The members of the Miners' Committee read these over their breakfasts, and it was with iron in the hearts and fury in the faces that they met me on the morning of another eventful day, "Black Friday."

Friday, April 15th; the scene is at the offices of the National Union of Railwaymen, Unity House, Euston Road, London. A meeting of the three organisations, miners, railwaymen, and transport workers, is to be held at 10.30 a.m. The miners hold their meeting a little earlier to consider the report which they propose to submit to the other members of the Triple Alliance, recording the whole of the negotiations between the employers and the Government up to that critical moment. The letter from the Prime Minister, written in his own handwriting in the early hours of the morning, has already been delivered to me by a special messenger at the miners' offices, Russell Square.

As has already been pointed out, this letter invited the Miners' Committee to Downing Street, on the assumption that the report submitted to the Prime Minister by his midnight intruders fairly represented what I had said at the meeting in the House of Commons.

The letter was received with ominous silence. Then several members began speaking at once. There was much agitation. Their impressions of what had happened had been exclusively gathered from the morning Press. Their concern was natural.

I filled in the facts, and gave a faithful account

of all that had transpired. I pointed out how a new opening had been created to get a discussion with the Government on wages pure and simple, and, in the second place, how an opportunity had presented itself for giving our colleagues upstairs a chance to decide whether they were with us, or against us, on the issue that they could understand, namely wages, or whether we were to invite a rebuff on the ground that the "pool" was too obscure and abstract to warrant co-operative action.

After a short but very bitter discussion, a vote was taken, and the invitation by the Prime Minister to go to Downing Street to discuss the new situation was rejected by a majority of one.

Such is the democratic character of our Trade Union institutions that a majority of one determines for weal or woe the destinies of millions of their fellow human beings.

They would not go to Downing Street, but would rather go upstairs and leave the situation where it was, demanding action from their colleagues on the two-fold issue of the "pool" and wages.

I, too, had arrived at a critical decision—fraught with considerable difficulty to myself and to my family. The rejection of the invitation prompted me to hand in my resignation as Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. I had done my best in the presence of my colleagues, (1) to bring about a settlement, or, (2) failing that, to ensure effective sympathetic action of our colleagues in the other two move-

ments. I had a perfectly clear vision of the correctness of this attitude. I was perfectly at ease within myself, but, realising that this supreme effort had been frustrated by a majority of one, I had no recourse but to hand over the task to some one else. The moments were intense. I knew intuitively what would happen upstairs. The report would be made, questions would be asked as to why the Prime Minister's offer had been rejected, a truthful answer would be given, the parties would then break up for private and separate consultation. The other two parties would decide, under the circumstances, that they could not act with the miners, and the organisation from which the miners had hoped so much would be bundled into the tomb, and the latter would be left practically alone and friendless for a much longer period still in their battle with the employers and the Government.

In every respect this judgment was literally fulfilled. The refusal of the miners, intended to be couched in the form of a letter, was sent to the Prime Minister. The letter was formulated, but I could not bring myself to sign it. I went to my own room and, with a full sense of the responsibilities and consequences, wrote out the terms of my own resignation. This was submitted to the Committee by the President, and was fully debated. In the course of time the President came to me and informed me that the Committee had unanimously passed a resolution refusing to accept it, and urged me in the name of the million members of the Miners' Federation

to re-consider it, and carry on regardless of the decision that the other members of the Triple Alliance had arrived at. When he invoked me to reconsider such a decision in the name of such a large multitude of men and their families, there was but one answer. I decided to continue.

There was much humiliation in all this. Had I not given my word to the House of Commons, and thus to the country generally, that my people would have favourably considered a wage settlement? Had I not received a rebuff which indicated that such a statement was now without foundation? A leading officer of such an organisation should always be in a position to have his public declarations honoured. If they are not so honoured, he is for ever robbed of his effectiveness in his public negotiations and work.

Stirring events followed close upon the heels of this personal one. The railwaymen and transport workers had considered the report. They had met separately, and again jointly, and had arrived at the conclusion that if the miners' decision were final in rejecting further negotiations on wages, then their own plans for a sympathetic strike were to be called off. Messrs. J. H. Thomas and Harry Gosling were deputed to bring this news to the miners, and they came along early in the afternoon with their message. A last appeal was made by them for the miners to reconsider their decision, but a majority of one made reconsideration impossible. Strike action on the part of the two Unions they represented was, therefore, definitely off, and the

miners were left alone to their reflections and their loneliness. That very day they regretted their decision, but they had missed the tide; never again would it flow quite in the same way.

The struggle was by this time six weeks old. It was now destined to run yet another seven. Seven weary weeks of suffering and misery for the people, with the inevitable compromise waiting them in the end.

The news was received with consternation and hope. Consternation among those who had looked forward to a great struggle between combined capital and combined labour, and hope amongst those who believed that immediately the strike was off the miners would come to terms and the country would avoid further disaster or greater industrial chaos. This day was called "Black Friday" immediately afterwards. The name is always remembered with dismay by thousands of the best of our Trade Unionists throughout the country. Those who are the most ignorant of the proceedings of that day and the day before were loudest in their denunciation of what had transpired. There was talk of betrayal by the leaders, who were both publicly dubbed as traitors and privately declared to be dishonest.

These things counted very little beside the fact that the miners' struggle was to continue, and has continued, to this day.

That there may have been influences at work in the other sections of the Alliance to avert a concerted stoppage I have no doubt, but of this

I am certain, that had the miners' executive realised, as I did, that a simple wage issue was the only one that would galvanise the other two parties into a decision for action, no back-stair diplomacy could have prevented action if the opportunity had been given. One thing was apparent to my mind then ; it is clearer than ever to me now. Men will only act together on simple understandable issues ; wherever there is complexity and abstraction, there will be diversity and disunity. The Triple Alliance would have functioned in an atmosphere of simplicity, but it could never function where there were cross-purposes or misunderstanding. It was not built in such a manner as would make it proof against divergent views. In fact, such an instrument would never be any good unless all the parties concerned therewith had a common grievance maturing at a common time.

The lesson was a salutary one, and has not been lost upon the Trade Union movement.

That I figured so prominently in the matter was more accidental than otherwise. Given precisely the same set of circumstances again, I should feel compelled to act in an exactly similar manner.

This was, undoubtedly, the most intense day of my life. Whilst I was saddened and sickened by the results of all the efforts that had been put forward, I had the internal satisfaction that throughout I had followed my best judgment. I had done my duty.

CHAPTER XVIII

A TREK IN THE WEST

IN 1922 the British Trade Union Congress conferred a great honour on me. I was elected by Congress to go to Canada in the following year to attend the Canadian Trades and Labour Convention, which was to be held in the city of Vancouver, B.C.

This distinctive compliment is not conferred, as a rule, upon the younger members of the Trade Union world. It comes more often to the men who have spent their lives in Trade Union work, and to whom it is given as a reward for long and valuable service to the Labour movement.

It is true that I did not serve as many years as many of their leaders, but, as will have been seen, what I lacked in years of service, I had made up by intensity of effort.

I had often wished to go to the American continent. Having travelled the whole of the European countries with the exception of Russia, and visited every coal-producing centre in Europe, it was the natural thing that I should yearn to visit the great coal-producing continent of the West.

The Canadian miners, from the provinces of Alberta in the west to Nova Scotia in the east, are members of the United Mine Workers' Association of America.

It had been my privilege to meet the President of the United Mine Workers of America, at some

of our own meetings in Europe. It may not be generally known, but the fact remains that the American and Canadian miners have been members of the Miners' Federation for many years, but John L. Lewis, their President, who occupies almost as influential a position in America as Mr. Sam Gompers, the veteran Trade Union leader of that continent, had recently been in London, and had fired my imagination with his descriptions of American life and of the American Trade Union movement, more especially that of the miners.

In August, 1923, therefore, Mrs. Hodges and myself embarked upon the *Athenia*, at Liverpool, for Montreal. Both being good sailors, we entered into the pleasures of the voyage with the greatest possible zest.

Seven days upon the Atlantic is one of the most restful, health-creating experiences possible. To those, however, who are pre-disposed to seasickness, I am afraid the voyage is a great trial of the flesh.

Thousands of people seem to prefer to travel across the Atlantic in the big liners, but for down-right enjoyment, for getting a real sea-sense, give me always the smaller passenger ships, for, in the course of a day or so, one gets to know quite intimately the ship's officers, the crew, and one's fellow passengers.

In the course of two days, one is on speaking terms with the whole of the ship's company, and by the time the voyage comes to an end, many new friendships are created which last for years afterwards. It is not the case, however, on the

big liners, where the atmosphere is much less personal, and where the social sense is not so highly developed. On a big liner, one has not got the sea atmosphere ; it is rather the spirit of the big hotel which prevails, and where one is no more than a mere unit on the passenger list.

We made a point of attending Divine Service on the first Sunday on board, joined most heartily in the singing, and listened to a sermon by a Canadian preacher, a clerical casual, who afterwards became a very firm friend, and who attended a meeting of my own, held in the Exhibition Grounds during the Exhibition week in the city of Toronto.

Off the coast of Labrador we entered the ice-fields, where the great icebergs still floated round like some great startlingly white cathedrals. There is no more beautiful sight than these floating temples, which on a day of fair visibility can be seen ten or fifteen miles away on the horizon. They are both beautiful and sinister. The navigation officer has to be constantly on the alert. A whole community of people are in the hollow of his hand. We remembered the *Titanic*.

As we entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we had our first glimpse of whales, whose track was visible along the surface of the water for long distances. Occasionally they would come up to spout, like a submarine to take its bearings, and then off again with express speed, until they were lost to sight over the horizon.

Undoubtedly, one of the finest sights in the world is to be secured whilst sailing along on

the broad bosom of the St. Lawrence River. We were entering the portals of a vast continent.

Quebec disappointed us. Naturally, everybody was delighted to see the city, but it did not come up to my visions of what that great natural fortress should be like. Its factories and workshops must have been using Nova Scotia coal, for their chimneys were belching forth black, thick, sooty smoke, which, with the assistance of the westerly wind, was being blown across the whole face of the city.

That part of the city which can be seen from the quay wall presented the appearance of a typically French port. The language of the long-shoremen, or dockers, was French, spoken in a manner quite different from the way in which it is spoken among any group of French workers in their native country whilst engaged upon their work.

There was a certain element of sadness hovering about this city. I had a feeling that the great waves of business and commerce had been sweeping westward, and were rolling up toward the interior towns, such as Montreal and Toronto. Quebec would soon be, so to speak, left high and dry, only to provide such facilities as were necessary to deal with the fishing and agricultural industries of the Quebec province which were nearer to the port of Quebec than to Montreal.

We arrived at this latter city on a Sunday morning. Hundreds of emigrants from Scotland were to disembark here. They were soon to put their feet upon the soil of a new country, upon

which they were to live their lives, bring up their families, and to continue the task begun centuries before of turning Canada from being the potentially richest country into the actually richest country in the world. It was with many a wistful thought of their own country that they stepped upon Canadian soil, but they turned their faces bravely toward the west, and to the unknown.

In common with the other passengers, we looked along the quay wall to see if there was any one there whom we recognised or who would recognise us. Almost all our passengers were expecting to meet some one or other who would give them a word of welcome to this new land. For a little while we looked in vain for some such recognition, and then a voice was heard shouting, "Is that you, Frank?" whereupon I noticed two men who were vigorously waving their hats to us. A quick answer in the affirmative made the recognition mutual, and as we stepped off the gangway on to the quay we were greeted with a hearty welcome to Canada by the President of the Montreal Trades Council in good vigorous English, and by an equally enthusiastic welcome from his colleague, who spoke in French.

It is not without significance that we should have been greeted in Canada in English and French. The fact that I was able to reply to both in their native tongue immediately placed a seal upon our friendship. During our short stay in Montreal I was called upon several times to deliver speeches in both languages. As a matter of fact there are large numbers of French-

speaking Canadians, who are even now, quite unable to make conversation in any other language than French. There is not only a difference in languages in the Province of Quebec, but there is a difference in culture, in habits, in institutions and in religion, for more than half of the French-Canadian population are Roman Catholic. The English people in Canada are almost invariably Protestant. These two cultures I found were in healthy rivalry, in certain aspects, but such rivalry disappeared in the Trade Union movement. When I spoke of the land of their fathers to Britons I referred to Britain ; for the French-Canadian this had to be translated into France. But nearly all regard Canada as their native home.

Our next place of call was Toronto, where we were due to take part in the Toronto Exhibition. By this time we were beginning to appreciate the bigger and fresher characteristics of the Canadian people. This was most marked in their hospitality and their business. It was quite a refreshing contrast to our own attitude at home. While the people there are bent upon carving out for themselves a destiny nobler and finer than that achieved by their ancestors in their native land, we in the old world are giving way under the impression that nationally we have achieved our goal in the march of civilisation.

Toronto is a busy, progressive, commercial city. Over all there is the characteristic of plenitude. Industry appeared to be in full swing. Poverty, as we understand it in the old world, is unknown. Its working-class population

is well paid, well fed and well housed. Over 60 per cent. of the people own their own homes. Their so-called slums are by comparison as good as the average artisan towns and garden villages of our own country. That there are many evils and abuses is readily conceded, but by comparison the whole quality and standard of living is higher there than in any similarly sized commercial city in Europe.

The Toronto Exhibition is a great feature of Canadian business and social life. It has been running annually for many years. One sees here a yearly Wembley on a national scale long before Wembley was born. A day is exclusively devoted to Labour. It is Labour Day. All the representative Labour leaders of the Province are invited by the directors of the exhibition to a lunch at which a special speech on Labour has to be delivered by a well-known Labour leader. I had been invited a year before to deliver this speech. I did, and afterwards delivered a speech to the vast throng of people who were outside. The speeches made, enthusiasm reached boiling point. We were honoured and feted everywhere. The Canadians, like the Americans, love a "talk," and to use their own expression, I had "put it over."

We then prepared to make the long trip from Toronto to Vancouver, which was a journey of five nights and four days in the same train.

From Toronto to Niagara Falls ! We were the guests of the Trades and Labour Council of Toronto. A voyage across Lake Ontario, which has a length of 190 miles, a width of 55 miles,

and an area of 7,260 square miles, and then up the swift-flowing Niagara River to the Falls. No sound, no sight, has ever thrilled me so profoundly as did these majestic waters.

There are two distinct Falls—the American Fall and the Horse-shoe Fall (Canadian). The first is the smaller (though this fact is not readily conceded by the American enthusiast), being 1,060 feet wide with a fall of 167 feet. The second, the Canadian Fall, forms itself into a majestic sweeping curve of some 3,000 feet, carrying in a mad tumultuous rush a depth of 20 feet of water into the chasm 158 feet below.

What beauty blended with power! No person with any appreciation of the true inwardness of things can help feeling the frailty of man and his finity when gazing with involuntary awe upon these all-powerful, almost eternal, elements. Long before the age of man these waters thundered headlong over the mighty rocks which form the river-bed. It is stated that the wear and tear of the waters upon the rocks cause the Falls to recede from six inches on the United States side to four feet per annum on the Canadian side, and that in the dim and distant ages the Falls were as far down as Lewiston, between six and seven miles below the present position.

We descended a shaft, walked through an underground tunnel, and found ourselves immediately underneath and behind the falling waters. One sees the sun's rays creating scores of little rainbows and changing the water drops into myriads of precious stones of the gayest hue.

But the brain of man has put a harness upon Niagara. Man has put this mighty flow to social and industrial uses, though happily without impairing its wondrous beauty. It is estimated that if the full drop between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario were utilised, the waters would equal the labour of 15 million horses working eight hours a day, or equal the amount of power produced by the consumption of 50 million tons of coal per year.

Even with but a small amount of its potential power being used, Niagara leads the way in annual output of electrical energy.

The Dominion of Canada is said to possess roughly 20 per cent. of the world's total water supply, and she is forging ahead rapidly in the scientific use of it. The Canadian waters of Niagara are used for the general good of Canadians. I saw here a great Socialist enterprise in the making, though Canadians do not use Socialist language in describing it. The fact remains, however, as I noted it down in the book of memory, that the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario is a public authority acting as trustee for the municipalities in a great scheme of social co-partnership. Municipalities are supplied with power at cost, and in turn they contract to pay a proportionate share of all charges and cost of production.

The Commission operates fourteen systems and supplies 275 municipalities with 340,000 horse-power over an area almost as large as England. In addition, 500 farms and 5,000 other rural consumers are furnished with elec-

trical power, both abundantly and cheaply. From Niagara Falls alone the Commission is supplying approximately 280,000 horse-power. In the city of Toronto the average cost is so low that the workpeople can light their six-room cottages at an annual cost of less than twelve dollars.

Undoubtedly Canada is a country of "magnificent distances." We left Toronto for Vancouver. We spent two nights and two days in a train, and even then had not arrived at Winnipeg. Three more nights and two days and we would see the Pacific Ocean. This is already a long ride for those of us who are accustomed to the short distances of our own country, and to whom the journey from London to Edinburgh seems practically endless.

We pass through Northern Ontario, most of which is wild and sparsely populated. With the exception of Port Arthur, on Lake Superior, there is practically no sign of community life. Everywhere, apparently endless belts of timber; whole forests clinging to a rocky surface with but very little soil to cover its baldness. There is an all-pervading sense of the primeval. In Northern Ontario Nature has been prodigal in her gifts, but not to the farmer.

The essentials for modern industry are there in abundance. Gold, nickel, iron ore, are found in generous quantities. If Canada ever becomes an industrial country, and she will, Ontario will be her backbone. In twenty years her silver mines have yielded over 40 million pounds sterling, and in a dozen years her gold mines

have produced over 20 millions. Copper and nickel have yielded equally good results. All these represent resources and possibilities which will always stand Canada in good stead, provided science and statesmanship go hand in hand.

As our train made towards Winnipeg a couple of men boarded her at a wayside station. They informed us of a deputation of emigrants then known as "British Harvesters," who were waiting to meet me at Winnipeg to lay before me the grievances from which they were suffering.

Although the train stopped only for a few minutes at Winnipeg, I consented to see them. What did I find? About fifty young fellows who had gone out with a bigger band of harvesters, most of whom had been absorbed in the work for which they had made the voyage across the mighty oceans and the journey into the very heart of Canada. These young men were the remainder, who were unable to adapt themselves to the rigorous conditions of life in the Great West.

Some of them had never been out of London before in their lives. They had been selected by hazard. No regard had been paid to their experience, their capabilities, or even their physique. In the main they were obviously out of place in such surroundings. They pleaded with me to make an effort to get them sent back.

I saw it was a wise thing to attempt. I did all I could to bring this about. But I concluded that a much more careful and discriminating method would have to be adopted in future if

emigration was to be of benefit to the emigrant and to Canada at the same time.

This little matter having been put in hand, we resumed our journey through hundreds of miles of rolling prairies. From Winnipeg to Edmonton and Saskatoon, and right into British Columbia. On either side of the railway track was nothing but an apparently endless sea of golden corn. It was the month of September. The land of the maple had dressed herself in her most glorious robes. There were hues and shades upon the trees the like of which I had never seen before—from the deepest green to startling yellow and burnished gold.

But despite the astonishing productivity of Canadian soil and its mellow autumnal attractiveness to the traveller, there seems to be a melancholy loneliness about her great prairie lands which makes them forbidding to one brought up in the thronging, humming life of our own great industrial centres.

I was informed that this loneliness is felt particularly by the womenfolk, who go with their husbands or to them in the vast spaces of the interior. A very high percentage of women in the provincial asylums are there in consequence of the depression and gloom which settle down upon them far from the company and haunts of their fellow creatures.

I felt that here lay Canada's national problem—namely, how to make this extraordinarily fertile land sufficiently amenable to retain a continuous zest for agricultural life among the population in the teeth of the growing attraction

of the industrial towns and cities, and the natural disposition of the average man to seek the company of his fellows.

The authorities are fully alive to this situation, and with the assistance of wireless, telephones, and motor cars, are making direct contact possible between the country and the city.

Canada can avoid the errors of Europe if by careful planning and statesmanlike forethought she maintains a correct balance between her agriculture and her industry. In the present state of the world an over-specialised industrial country, with a corresponding neglect of agriculture, creates a sorry heritage for the children of her citizens.

Here and there Canadian delegates boarded the train *en route* for the Vancouver Congress. They were not shy. There is a frankness and a breeziness about Canadians which make one feel at home with them immediately on introduction. We were all great friends long before we reached British Columbia, and began our wonderful train ride over the Rocky Mountains.

Up and up to Jasper Park, among the pines, the purling streams, and the roaring torrents. Mountains rest upon mountains, flinging up their peaks into the blue skies. Mount Robson and Mount Edith Cavell stand out in their startling robe of white and dominate the lesser ranges.

In the sheer delight, the intoxicating beauty of the primeval scenery, and the purity of the atmosphere, we stand out in the observation car of our train, a dozen delegates, and burst into song. Songs of praise to our Creator, songs

of the joy of life, of wood and stream, of mountain and glen.

Then down and down to the foothills, along the sides of yawning chasms and hurrying rivers—and at the end of the sixth day, the Pacific Ocean, our destination, Vancouver, B.C.

CHAPTER XIX

TRADE UNIONS AND OPIUM

VANCOUVER, B.C., was the city in which the Canadian Convention of Labour was to be held. I had never attended a similar Convention before, but found in the main that it followed the plans adopted by the Trade Union Congress of Great Britain, the chief difference being that the discussions were oft-times carried on in two languages, this to provide adequate opportunity for expression from the French-Canadians of the Province of Quebec.

Whilst there were fraternal delegates attending this Convention from the United States of America and from Europe, I could not help but feel that the members of the Convention desired specially to hear a message from the Old Country.

There is a great love of the Old Country in the hearts of the Canadian people. I found wherever I went that Britain was spoken of in terms of real affection. Their loyalty to us was unbounded and unaffected. I was amazed at the degree of loyalty displayed towards the British

Crown, so much so that I came to the conclusion that, outwardly at any rate, the Canadians were more demonstratively loyal than Britishers within our own islands.

The proceedings at meetings at which I was present in some cases opened with the National Anthem or closed with the National Anthem, as the case might be. I concluded that there were ties of affection and sympathy between Canadians and this country, due, more especially, to the fact that the average Canadian still regards Great Britain as his homeland, despite the fact that they are intensely proud of Canada and Canadian institutions.

The greatest hospitality was displayed towards us by the people of Vancouver in general and by the Labour movement in particular. We were honoured and feted and entertained in a manner which gave us great cause for gratification. I was invited to speak at several gatherings of the citizens in that short luncheon period which Canadians devote partly to satisfying their bodily appetites and partly to their intellectual curiosity.

These meetings were marked by great enthusiasm. The Canadians, like the Americans, are fond of what they call a "talk." I had the greatest difficulty in evading commitments to speak in many parts of the city under different auspices and in the surrounding countryside. There was a warmth and a geniality, an openness and a frankness in the general attitude of these dwellers on the Pacific coast which immeasurably impressed me.

The Convention had its national problems and its provincial problems. The far-flung distances of Canada make each Province practically a separate State, and the tendency is markedly developed showing how separate States may pursue their individual interests regardless of the general welfare of the whole Dominion. But the leadership of the Canadian Labour movement is always in the direction of unifying their separate provincial tendencies and creating a strong, resolute, national and united movement. There were the Rights and the Lefts—the steady, shrewd, far-seeing Trade Union official with ripe experience, and the ardent, youthful, impetuous enthusiast who could not tolerate the steady march of progress of the older movement, but rather endeavoured to start out on new lines towards new goals, as is the case in every movement in the world. There were the Constitutionalists ; there were the Communists : so that one found oneself in quite a familiar atmosphere, although the problems to be dealt with were different both in quantity and character from our own.

It was soon evident to me that in Canada the Labour movement and the conditions of the workpeople generally were different from our own. The influence of the American Labour movement upon that of Canada was powerful and obvious. The conditions of the Canadian workers, although infinitely better than those of our own countrymen at home, were still in many respects inferior to those of the American workmen over the border. There was a marked sense

of independence among the workpeople which was expressed in the Convention itself. Wages were higher, the standard of living was better, social legislation for the aged, the injured, the infirm, the weak, the widow and the orphan was superior to that of Britain. The very newness of the country had placed the Canadians in a position of superiority to which we can only attain in this country by the most careful organisation and well-planned and scientific methods.

This may be the case in every great Dominion or Colony, where for the most part the treasures of Nature are practically virginal in their character.

I remember my own speech was first in the nature of a report of our movement in this country, and a commendation of the achievements of the Young Canadian movement which were already so marked. I endeavoured to create an atmosphere of real understanding and co-operation between the people of Canada and ourselves, an atmosphere which did not require a great deal of artificial stimulation. In fact, it was there already. Any tendency towards aloofness between these two countries could be averted by an understanding of the problems which confront the two, and by sympathetic treatment thereof.

Overlooking the Pacific, almost the nearest point of approach from Japan and China, Vancouver had become very largely a dumping ground for Japanese and Chinese immigrants. The Yellow races were to be seen everywhere.

For the most part they occupied the menial positions in the life of the West. They were hotel waiters, cooks, valets, domestic servants, and were generally engaged in doing the portage for the White races in that part of the world.

They lived in their own community, Chinatown, occupying a very large portion of Vancouver city itself. They oftentimes became a source of great concern to the authorities. They certainly are a cause of anxiety to the White population, and particularly to workers. Their standard of living is low, and, unless kept within well-defined limits, they are inclined to reduce the standard of living of the White workers themselves. Their opium smoking habits gripped them tightly. The authorities were very severe, and necessarily so, in their treatment of the secret opium smoker.

One night, after the work of the Convention was over, one or two of the delegates were invited by the police to pay a visit to Chinatown, on an occasion when they had resolved to clear up and clear out some of the secret opium dens which were known to be established.

They invited me to accompany them. Nothing loth, and always eager for a new adventure, I consented. At eleven o'clock we started out. The chief detective knew nearly every Chinese by name, for he had been in that district some twenty years. At first it is impossible for a stranger to distinguish one Chinese from another. The general cast of the countenances and build is very uniform. But he knew them all. He knew their habits and their weaknesses. Infor-

mation had already been brought to him by a Chinaman who was in his pay that in a certain street a number of his compatriots would that night be engaged in illicit opium smoking. The numbers of the houses were given.

We walked jauntily through the streets without creating the appearance of making for any special destination. Chinese looked at us curiously, and men furtively darted here and there, and into and out of most unexpected doors and passages. It became clear to me that our intentions were known. A signal went flying through the neighbourhood : " Detectives are here ! "

Without any ado the chief detective went straight to the house of which he had received previous information, and knocked at the door. Immediately one or two figures were seen flying down the street from a back exit. Some of them were chased, collared, and brought back.

No answer was given to the detective's knock, but a violent lurch against the frail door burst it open. He rushed upstairs, inviting me to follow him. This was difficult. The staircase was in darkness. No sound could be heard. I had a feeling that some one would be waiting for us in the passageway, in accordance with the conventions of the ordinary detective story. But there was no one. A faint odour pervaded the building, which made the detective say, " We've got them."

Electric flash lamps came out, and up the stairs we went. With a rush, another door was burst open, and we almost fell into a dimly-

lighted room in which Chinese could be seen lying about on slabs, in different degrees of intoxication and lethargy. These, apparently, were too far gone to make any resistance. The little braziers were lit, the opium pipe attached thereto, the opium pellets and cigarettes, and slices of orange which made up the opium smoker's paraphernalia, were all there. These were quickly snatched up and pushed into a bag, the smokers being too stupefied to offer resistance.

This was not one of the grand palaces for opium smokers of which I had been informed. There were no luxurious divans or couches. This was apparently the haunt of the very poor, upon whom the habit was so strong that their last cent was spent on the purchase of this subtle drug which probably transformed them in their moments of intoxication from the harshness and horror of their lot into the realms of some happy paradise.

The implements were confiscated, and the owner of the place was hurried into the police van waiting below ; whilst I was instructed to wait in the room until the detectives had seen that the leaders were safely ensconced in the Canadian "Black Maria."

I found myself alone with the dazed ones. I felt sad and shocked, and the most I could do was to go round to each one in turn and offer them English cigarettes, which they accepted with avidity.

I was glad to get away, and wondered whether any form of legal repression adopted by the

authorities could effectively stamp out this powerful habit which degraded human beings down to the level of brutes.

While we were staying in Vancouver an important message came to me, borne by special courier from the headquarters of the United Mine Workers of America, inviting my wife and myself to accompany this courier into America, after the proceedings of the Convention in Vancouver terminated. The courier was a member of the Legislature of the State of Pennsylvania—one of the men who had travelled in all kinds of capacities throughout the length and breadth of America ever since his boyhood days.

He was a typical Jack London roamer. He had been a "hobo," had "jumped" freight trains, had done prospecting for gold, acted as guide in the great canyons of Arizona and Colorado, had become an organiser of the American Mining Workers' Union, and had eventually found himself a member of the Pennsylvania Parliament.

In this letter he was authorised to take us into America—to show us as much of America as time would permit, to visit the great western States of U.S.A., and to meet the miners of America and study on the spot the conditions under which those miners worked and lived.

The invitation, which was signed by the President of the United Mine Workers' Union, was heartily accepted. I cabled home asking for permission to make an extended stay, and received a ready reply in the affirmative. We

prepared to take what was perhaps the most interesting trip that a couple of people could have into the great Republic of the West, to study and understand for ourselves its potentialities and its possibilities.

We took boat from Vancouver, down the Pacific coast to Vancouver Island, where the inhabitants are much more distinctly British in character than the Canadians of the mainland.

From Vancouver Island, again along the Pacific, and then into America through that doorway of the West—Seattle. We were on American soil for the first time, and all a-tremble with excitement at the prospect of being on intimate relationship with her people for almost two more months.

CHAPTER XX

UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

IN the city of Seattle we were welcomed by the representatives of the local miners' organisation. They seemed to be really overjoyed to be in touch with the Secretary of the International Miners' Federation, whom they had never seen before, and whose work had only been made known to them through the medium of their trade journals. Like most of the workmen in Western America they appeared to enjoy a degree of prosperity which was of a much higher quality than that of our own workmen

at home. The working-class houses, or homes, as they are called, were architecturally more varied, possessing more labour-saving devices, and with much more scientific sanitation than those of the working classes of any similarly sized city in our own country. In this city some 50 per cent. of the workmen live in their own houses, and the spirit of independence is to be felt over all in consequence. Seattle is probably one of the most civilised and progressive of the Western States.

From Seattle we were taken through the States of Montana, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and then into California. What a contrast between all these great Western States ! Montana, the home of the copper mining industry of the West, was full of interest. We saw what it was like to live in a great mining camp. It was bleak, barren and treeless. Huge rubbish heaps, from the deep copper mines, were in obvious evidence. The whole countryside was of copper colour, caused by the processes through which the ore passed before taking on its final character.

The city of Butte, Montana, is the fiercest place that I have hitherto struck. It is a real wild mining camp of the West.

What a change between Butte, Montana, and Colorado Springs and Denver ; the latter was a gentle country, where Nature seems to have been prodigal to Americans, not only in natural resources, but in climate and physical beauty !

By train and car we explored the snow-capped peaks of the American Rockies. We put our feet on the summit of Pike's Peak, 14,000 odd

feet above the level of the sea. There are no Alpine dangers for the average American in climbing Pikes' Peak, for has he not constructed a driveway from the base of the mountain right up to the summit, wide enough for two large cars to pass at any point, cars specially constructed for the purpose of climbing steep gradients? Up and up we go till we reach the snow line, at which point we take a meal at a little hotel enshrined in a small forest of pines. At this stage, special chains are put on the wheels of the car to prevent skidding, and then upward into the eternal snows, where the road is kept free and open by the constant application of giant snow-cutters. We see the winding road, over which we have passed, hundreds of feet below us, like some gigantic white snake wriggling its way into the illimitable blue. We reach the summit where breathing is difficult, where the heart beats furiously because of the rarefied atmosphere, and after a few minutes down again into the valleys, into the warm sunshine and dense verdure of the lowlands. We take train over the long and dreary desert of Arizona, over hundreds of miles of tractless prairie. Here and there one sees an occasional coyote running away from the approaching train, stunted cacti, alkali beds, groups of poor-looking Redskins, eking out a bare existence in the manufacture of ware, wicker baskets, beads, spoons, trinkets and cheap jewellery. The prairies and deserts of Arizona are the dreariest places I have ever seen.

Then a day at the Grand Canyon, which is undoubtedly one of the most wonderful sights

in the world. The Canyon looked to me as though some great god of ancient mythology had taken a mighty scoop out of the face of the earth, some 200 miles long, ten to thirteen miles from rim to rim, and more than a mile deep. The whole inside of the earth's crust had been laid bare by the action of the river, wind and storm over many hundreds and thousands of years. Down in its depths roamed the wild asses, wild deer and the American lion. Colorado River is now endeavouring to eat its way through primeval granite rocks, sinking the gulf inch by inch, year by year, century by century, and so on, until the end of time, unless artificially stopped.

From Arizona we reached California with its endless orange, lemon and grape-fruit groves, its miles of apple and pear orchards, its vineyards, and its peach trees. The climate of California is most equable, it is the land of perpetual summer, and, in consequence, the retreat of the American millionaire.

A few days in Los Angeles, a day in Hollywood, the home of the great film industry of the world, were necessary, in order to get a correct impression of the life of the Californian people.

Hollywood, although the home of the film artistes, is a city where class distinctions and the caste system are more profound and clear-cut even than in India. The homes of the artistes are built on Sunset Hill. The crowds and choruses are housed at the foot thereof, the lesser stars have their homes adjoining but still slightly higher, whilst the greater stars of the film firma-

ment, in strict order of importance and income, are to be found in the higher altitudes of the hill.

Charlie Chaplin occupies the highest point, his neighbours are Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. There will be no house built beyond that of Mr. Chaplin's until a greater star than he is discovered!

We spent a few hours in the studios, and watched the production of several film dramas, where all the romance attached to the screen is lost in the sheer materialism of its production. We had a word with the producer of "The Covered Wagon" and an introduction to several of the Indian chiefs who acted therein.

Life is very intense at Hollywood. The joys of the Bohemian and of the Eastern world fade into insignificance compared with the hectic life of that great Western town.

I liked, too, the happy abandonment of Los Angeles, but the work of the world is not done there. It is the happy hunting ground, not of the Hopi, the Supias and the Navajo Indians, but of the American millionaire.

A short trip to the island of Catalina, from Los Angeles, was productive of many interesting revelations. After a voyage of a few hours we arrived at the island which is just an emerald in a setting of limpid blue. I conjured up all kinds of romantic ideas about this island, most of which were destroyed when I discovered that it belonged, lock, stock and barrel, to an American millionaire who had made his money in the production of chewing gum. A trip around the

island in a glass-bottomed boat was a source of endless fascination.

The bottom of the boat was of thick plate glass ; the seats were arranged round the outer edge of the glass with a rail in front on which people could lean and look down into the clear, limpid depths below. Fish of every shape and hue floated gracefully about underneath. A lecturer explained the characteristics of the many species of fish. Some were great golden fellows. Others had gold and yellow stripes around their bodies ; others were a perfect blue ; and yet others ranged in varied hues from bright green down to darkest indigo. Submarine nature is seen in all her moods and work, but the law of the survival of the fittest reigned supreme.

We glided slowly over the white ocean-bed and then stopped. A diver from Hawaii slipped over the side like some bronze god, went slowly down and down to the bed of the ocean, there to pick up most exquisitely-coloured shells which he brought to the surface at intervals of two minutes, to be sold as souvenirs among the interested watchers. The ship moved on, and over a great submarine forest, where the trees and the plants waved gently to and fro in perfect rhythm with the movement of the waves.

Here a great industry flourished in the turning of those ocean plants into iodine, which brought relief and succour to suffering humanity. A glimpse of a great family of seal disporting themselves in the sunshine on the rocks along the seashore, gambolling in playful mood or reclining

in attitudes of repose, enjoying the sheer sensuality of the warm sunshine, brought our sightseeing to an end. Back to Los Angeles, through a shoal of flying fish, winging their way swiftly and gaily over the waters, and our day was done.

Los Angeles is the one city in the world where for every three inhabitants, including babies, there is one motor-car. It is easier and quicker to walk from uptown to downtown, than it is to ride in a car, so dense and so packed are the streets with these vehicles. The art of pedestrianism will soon be lost in America.

From there we took train up the coast, to the city of Portland in the state of Oregon, where the American Convention of Labour was being held. We arrived in time for the opening, and although I was not a fraternal delegate from Great Britain to that Convention, I was called upon by Mr. Sam Gompers, the veteran Trade Union leader of America, to make a speech. Mr. Gompers, next to the President, was the most influential man in the States. A microphone was attached to the table for my especial benefit.

I delivered my speech, which was received with great enthusiasm by the delegates representing the entire American Labour movement. I not only spoke to my immediate audience, but, as I was afterwards informed, to an audience of over half a million people who were listening by wireless to the Conference proceedings. There I met the officers of the United Mine Workers of America, who entertained us with such a warmth of feeling as we had never experienced before. For sheer hospitality and genuine interestedness,

I have never met the equals of the Americans of the West.

Great movements are afoot. The democratic giant is stirring itself. The lot of the American workman is rapidly improving in consequence. I am convinced that no workmen in the world enjoy such good conditions of employment, such wages, as the American workman. It is true they have not yet entered into politics in the same sense as ourselves, but the Trade Union movement is powerful, and this is reflected in the life of the people.

Space will not permit further detailed descriptions of my experiences in that part of the world, but I have resolved that if ever the opportunity presented itself, I would revisit the great West for the purpose of studying in even greater detail all the forces that are at work in the creation and development of that great Western civilisation.

CHAPTER XXI

A CHAPTER FOR THE YOUNG

BACK in England again in November, 1923, only to be plunged into the vortex of a General Election. For many years, and during many elections, I had been assisting the British Labour movement to make progress on its political side. It would not be immodest on my part to say that I had worked as intensely as most men to increase the numbers of the

Labour Party in the House of Commons, and generally to promote the growth of political opinion for Labour throughout the country, but I had never been a candidate myself before. On this occasion, under considerable pressure from within the Party, I decided to take my place in the lists. I stood for Labour in the division of Lichfield. We won, and I became a Member of Parliament.

I believed that I could be of greater value to the miners in the House of Commons whilst remaining Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain than I could be by remaining exclusively in the latter office. I had no special thought or desire to go into the Government. A rule of the Miners' Federation provides that its Secretary cannot at the same time be a Member of Parliament. This was rigidly enforced at a conference of the miners' delegates soon after the election, and a decision was arrived at to appoint my successor. This was done without a reference to the rank and file of the membership.

I am convinced that it was contrary to the wishes of the members. I can only express the hope that time will show that the decision of the Conference was just and the results will be beneficial to the organisation as a whole.

A Labour Government was then formed, and the Prime Minister invited me to take up the office of Civil Lord of the Admiralty, and I accepted.

As I write these concluding paragraphs I have just said "good-bye" to a miner from my own mining village, who has just dropped in to see

me to renew our old acquaintanceship. I used to work in the next place to him at the colliery. He reminds me of many of the little incidents that used to make up our lives in the daily work of the mine. I reflect that it is a far cry from the mine to the Ministry, and yet, in point of years, the time is extraordinarily short. I further reflect that at heart I am still a miner. The influence of the industry is still strong upon me, and this influence, I have no doubt, must remain stamped upon me for the rest of my life. If a man ever forgets his own origin, if he has ceased to acknowledge his own humble beginnings, he is a little man, and he will never accomplish any big things for his fellows in his life. His continued contact with his people is vital ; they are the wells of inspiration from which he must take his daily draught, they are the soil in which his roots must be deeply imbedded to draw nourishment and support in his daily task. The alternative would be snobbery of the worst kind, and snobbery is the father of failure. A man must appear to do things in the wider sphere of work which are not called for or necessary in the work which he has left. That is unavoidable, but if he feels that he is still one of his people in spirit and in action, he is able to go forward in the task to which he has set himself with undiminished energy and enthusiasm.

In all the tasks of life to which I have set myself, I have been tremendously assisted by this feeling and supported by this knowledge, and in this connection I would venture a few words of advice, born of my experience, to the

young men and maidens of the present day who have arrived at a stage of active life where I was twenty-two years ago.

First plan out some definite fixed purpose, and let that purpose become a prime article of faith. If that purpose be not narrow, limited or individual, so much the better. If it be a purpose of a wide, general, all-absorbing, comprehensive character, such as public service, it will soon develop into a great dynamic motive. It is impossible for them to foresee the lines of development that lie before them in anything like detail, in such a case they will be unable to trace their horoscope in the life that is about to unfold before them. The great thing is a set, resolute purpose. For them the road will not be uniformly wide or even. It will oftentimes be intricate and tortuous. In welldoing men will speak evil of them, and many a man has given up the struggle in attacks upon him which have been unjustified and untrue. They have given up their purpose and sought the cool, sequestered spheres of life rather than continue in the hurly-burly rough-and-tumble of public affairs. But to retire from public service because the tongue of ill-report is often heard is a sign of weakness. If by tenaciously holding to the fixed purpose of public service "more kicks than ha'pence" are inevitable, they have always the inner knowledge and satisfaction that they are doing their best. Such an assurance acts as a buoy to prevent them from going under in times of tempest and trouble. Many enemies will be made, many jealousies will confront them; they will

make friends, too, who are a solace and consolation in the dark days. There is always the goal luring one on. Their purpose in life will remain to accomplish acts which will improve human values and intensify the quality of human life.

If ever their goal gets dim or obscure, activity will be correspondingly reduced. We must be eminently practicable in all things. An exquisite building characterised by delightful architecture, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, may be the goal of the architect and the builder. Every line, every drawing, every specification has to be worked out in minute detail; every stone, every brick has to be laid down one by one in the erection of that structure before the ideal objective is attained. Be realists, therefore, and not only idealists. The work of life is more complicated and more detailed than the building of the finest edifice the world has seen. Men may be impatient with you because of the slow results which follow from your constructional efforts. Be not perturbed because of this form of opposition. Throw yourselves, immerse yourselves in all the work necessary for the completion of your own edifice. Though you may have to hand on to others the task of completing what you have begun, you will realise that what you have done is of a lasting and permanent character. The two vital tools in the equipment of a man for the work of life must be knowledge and understanding. With these he can build to advantage, providing he knows what he wants to build, and always keeps the objective sharply

defined before him. He can then gradually overtake his ideal, and thus secure the intensest satisfaction which life can offer.

I approach the future with its wide-open arms in the same spirit as in the past, not knowing what it holds for me in the pursuit of the objective of service. Uncertainties there are and will be, but uncertainties are overbalanced by fortitude, and difficulties are there to be overcome.

APPENDIX I

From *Daily Herald*, Nov. 12 and 24, 1923.

AMERICA'S WAY WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

Frank Hodges on Results of Ending Attack on Workers' Wages

HIGHER WAGES—MORE WORK

ONE of the constructive proposals of the British Labour Movement for dealing with unemployment is "Restore the Home Market and Develop Britain."

British employers have reduced the wages of the workers by a thousand million pounds per annum since Armistice Day, 1918. The home market has thus been crippled, and to this fact can be attributed in part the existence of 1,250,000 unemployed.

America has put into practice the theory of high wages, and in the striking article given below Mr. Frank Hodges, who has just returned from that country, maintains that the result has been a fillip to industry, the revival of the home market, and the steady elimination of unemployment.

ARMY THAT VANISHED

By FRANK HODGES, Secretary, Miners' Federation of Great Britain

The most striking phenomenon in modern industrial life is the disappearance of America's unemployment problem.

Two years ago the United States of America had an unemployed army stated to number between five and six millions. That colossal army has vanished. The problem no longer exists. The fortunate country is the Mecca of miserable Europeans.

So amazed was I at this extraordinary circumstance, that my interrogations of America's public men were all directed to the clearing up of the mystery.

In reality there is no mystery.

America's unemployed problem has been solved, quite naturally, by an internal boom in trade ; but the internal boom itself is only an effect, and the cause of this effect is high wages.

I know this categorical statement cuts across all the wishy-washy economics of our after-dinner capitalist wiseacres, and the nonsense of Lord Hugh Cecil manifested in his recent letter to *The Times*, but I base it upon actual information supplied by those who know best in America, backed up by the economic history and statistics of the last three years.

The peak of employment in America, after the war, was reached in the beginning of 1920, but signs of depression set in in the middle of that year, as in this country.

As in Great Britain, at the first sign of these depressions, employers of labour got panicky ; the number of unemployed grew : employers cast about for remedies.

As in Great Britain, they hit upon the first that occurred to them—the most natural one—let us cut wages.

In many of the minor industries, where the depression was the most acute, reductions were granted by the men. Unemployment grew.

The gospel of low wage costs and high productivity was in many cases accepted by the unthinking, and unemployment still grew.

Miners' Lead.

Early attempts in 1920 and 1921 were made to induce the larger unions to accept reduction in wages ; several accepted. The miners' unions were approached, and, as every one knows, they maintained their peak wages without a serious fight until March, 1922.

At this stage unemployment began to get stable, but in April, 1922, the fiercest fight in the annals of the United Mineworkers of America began, and the whole economic life of America was disorganised for a period of five months.

But the miners won their point. They asked for no increase, they simply fought to maintain their peak post-war wages, and they succeeded. They resumed work.

From that moment can be traced the revival of America's economic life.

The miners came back with their old purchasing power unimpaired. They bought heavily of the goods they needed to make up for their five months' stagnation.

Then, lo and behold, another miracle ! The United States Steel Corporation began to think of giving their workmen an advance in wages without an application, and in the early part of

this year they actually advanced wages by 11 per cent.

Advances in wages were also secured by negotiations in many of the other trades.

The following industries can be noted as having received advances in wages after March, 1922, and particularly after July, 1922, when the great miners' strike came to an end :

Boots and shoes, 8s. a week.

Cotton manufactures, nearly 12s. a week.

Cotton finishing, 10s. a week.

Hosiery and underwear, 6s. a week.

Men's ready-made clothing, 10s. a week.

Silks, £1 8s. a fortnight.

Iron and steel, £2 4s. a fortnight.

Car building and repairing, nearly 12s. a fortnight.

Again, taking the State of New York, where a very large percentage of America's smaller industries are located, the average increases are equally pronounced.

The figures are taken from representative New York State factories :

March, 1922.—Average weekly earnings, £4 18s.

May, 1923.—£5 10s., or 12s. increase, per week in thirteen months.

Here we come to the crux of the whole matter. America's adult working population may be put at a very modest estimate at 20 millions. Taking only 12s. a week as the average increase for American adult workers, since June, 1922, and taking only 45 working weeks for the year ending June, 1923, we have this extraordinary result, that £540,000,000 worth of new

purchasing power has been put in the hands of the working class.

Immediate Results.

The money for the most part has been spent, although there has been considerable saving, as is shown by the growth of the trade union banks throughout America, and particularly in the East. It is just the fact that the money has been earned and spent which has solved the unemployment problem.

Those who were in employment, and got higher wages, at once increased their standard of living by newer and more novel purchasing.

One in every nine of the population has a motor car, as against one in every hundred in Great Britain. Workmen own their own homes : in some of the western cities the percentage is as high as 70 per cent. owned by the occupiers.

A great fillip has thus been given to the two industries of engineering and building. Newer and better homes are being constructed, so much so that there is a marked scarcity in the building trades, the result of which has been again to throw wages upon a higher level in these trades.

Better and more plentiful clothing is purchased ; the clothing trades are therefore in full swing.

Finer garments are worn, and thus there is a strong demand for silk clothing and hosiery.

More food is eaten, and a new fillip is given to agriculture and stock raising.

Effect on Costs.

The net result of all this is described as an

internal boom, and I return to my definite conclusion that the original cause is high wages.

High wages alone can maintain and increase the standard of living of the vast majority of customers in any country. High wages make for prosperity. In America, high wages have made also for industrial efficiency.

If the cost of living had gone up along with this enormous increase in wages, my argument would have been negatived; in fact, I should never have put it forward. But I find that during the period when this increase in wages had been going on, the cost of living has either declined or remained stationary.

This state of things is easily explainable by the fact, that the high wages themselves and the shorter hours in certain of the trades have compelled an ever-improving standard of technique in production.

This confirms the growing capitalist belief in America that high wages are synonymous with national well-being.

APPENDIX II

HIGH WAGES KILL UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Frank Hodges Gives Further Reasons for American Workers' Success

The article telling how America killed unemployment by paying higher wages to workers—which appeared in the *Daily Herald* of Novem-

ber 12th from Mr. Frank Hodges, Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain—still continues to arouse the keenest interest throughout the country.

Another striking article by Mr. Frank Hodges—showing how America has increased her internal markets by advances in wages, while we have killed our markets through low wage-bills—appears below.

This article will add further impetus to the constructive proposal of the British Labour Movement for dealing with unemployment by "Restoring the Home Market and Developing Britain."

By FRANK HODGES

Further information is now available, proving that the disappearance of America's unemployed problem is largely, if not wholly, due to the success of the trade union movement of America, in securing high wages.

The Federal Department of Labour reports that between September of this year and September, 1922, wages have increased in 43 industries by 2·05 per cent., and that the number of workers engaged in these industries has increased by 10·6 per cent.

It is amusing to read how the Tariff Press has endeavoured to prove that this is not due to the trade unions, not to far-sighted employers, but to "protection."

This is as untrue as another statement made by a prominent person in America, that high

wages and the disappearance of the unemployed were due to Prohibition.

America is a Protectionist country, but it was Protectionist when the six million unemployed army came into being.

How a start was Made.

It is common knowledge in America that the United Mineworkers provided the solution for the unemployed problem by fighting for and securing their peak wages of the war period in 1922.

The eyes of the American trade union movement are at present on the United Mineworkers.

In April of next year the more short-sighted of the mineowners will endeavour to force a reduction in that industry, but public opinion is sufficiently informed that, in the event of the coalowners' success, the spectre of unemployment will again raise its ugly head in the United States. (The United Mineworkers were able to maintain the *status quo* for yet another five years.)

The *Morning Post* has stated that the miracle was performed by the passing of the new United States Customs Tariff, which took place at midnight on September 21st, 1922.

Facts Ignored.

This, of course, could only rest on the assumption that it was the imports from the rest of the world which had caused unemployment, and that if they could be excluded, American workmen would do the work done previously by foreign workmen.

He (the *Morning Post* writer) probably omitted to inquire, and certainly forgot to state, that the value of imports into the United States in 1922 was higher by over five hundred million dollars than the value of imports in 1921, and that in the first eight months of this year the value of imports into the States has exceeded by six hundred million dollars the amounts imported in the first eight months of 1922.

Our opponents cannot have it both ways.

It was not the cutting down of imports that threw America on her own resources—for imports have increased—but the simple fact that the purchasing power of the American workpeople has been so tremendously augmented by increases in wages, that they not only have had the means to buy bigger quantities of American-made goods, but have had margins to spare to buy foreign-made goods, such as British-made boots, for example, which are regarded as the most popular, and of which more than 56,000 dollars' worth was bought in August of this year alone.

50s. *Minimum Wage Proposal.*

And now I am able to restate my first declaration that *the unemployed problem of this country could be reduced speedily to manageable proportions if the purchasing power of the working classes of this country was to be at once increased by advances in wages.*

We have killed our own internal market through low wage-bills.

If a Government were to say that all workers

should have a minimum wage of not less than 50s. a week, I venture the opinion that within a year our unemployed army would be practically negligible.

I agree that this is no final remedy, but it is the nearest to hand.

